



Wired for Sex:

A.D.A.M.

By

Raven Willow-Wood  
& Kimberly Zant

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## Chapter One

“How’s our new ... *head of security* working out?” CEO Cal Johnson asked his VP of marketing.

Phil Whitmore grinned. “Smooth. He infiltrated without a hitch. I’ve been carefully monitoring the chit-chat around the office, and so far nobody has a clue of what he is. The military is going to be impressed. I think we can safely jack the price per unit up by a hundred percent.”

Cal Johnson frowned. Leaning back in his seat, he toyed with the pen in his hand, idly twirling it between his fingers, ‘walking’ it down finger to finger and back again, over and over until Phil was grinding his teeth.

The mannerism had always irritated the shit out of Phil since he had a suspicion there was nothing either idle or unconscious about it. It was just one more way for Cal to show off his superior dexterity. “It’s early days, yet,” Cal said finally. “He’s only been on the job a few months, and he doesn’t actually have that much interaction with the other employees. I don’t want to jump the gun on this. He’s state of the art—but there’s a lot of his makeup that’s of a highly experimental nature. We could be in deep shit if we start shipping the new units out and they malfunction—particularly considering their capabilities.”

Phil managed an off-handed shrug, although inside he was simmering. He wondered, if he’d suggested months more of testing on the android, if Johnson would’ve vetoed that idea, too. It seemed to him that, no matter what he recommended, Johnson always went in the opposite direction. “His interaction with the employees has been fairly minimal, true, but the other security guards are already showing signs of deferring to him when it comes to security matters, and the women in the office want to fuck him so bad they can taste it. They’ve been pretty vocal about it—I’m not counting the ones that just stare at him when he walks by like he’s a juicy piece of steak.”

Instead of looking pleased by information, Johnson’s frown deepened. “Any of them made passes?”

Phil shrugged again. “As far as I know, none of them have propositioned it outright, but they’re giving out signals right and left. Obviously, they haven’t figured out it’s a droid or they wouldn’t be creaming in their panties every time it walks by.”

Johnson’s lips thinned. “And exactly how many has it fucked so far?”

Phil reddened. “None that I know of, sir. I imagine I would’ve heard about it on the office grapevine if it had nailed someone—or several someones. It wasn’t programmed for that, after all.”

“Not specifically, but the information damned well ought to be in its data banks. And it *was* programmed to interact—just like its human counterparts would—It *is* equipped for sex, and I’d say any *man* would’ve taken at least one or two of them up on their offer in this time, wouldn’t you?”

Phil was disconcerted. “You think I should tell them to take it down tonight and program that in?”

Johnson looked disgusted. “That would defeat the purpose of this little exercise, wouldn’t it? If it fails to perform as an ordinary man would in any given situation, then the programming is faulty, wouldn’t you say?”

“So .... Where do we go from here?”

Johnson went back to toying with his pen. “Maybe it’s still learning,” he said finally. “There are just too many variables in human relationships to program that sort of thing in—every relationship is going to be a little different depending on personality factors. Let’s give it a few more weeks and see if it begins to interact more naturally, adopts ‘personality’ traits of its own. I’ve looked at the reports myself. The other security guards are deferring to it, but the general consensus is that ‘he has a poker up his ass’. They might admire its skills, but it has to be able to blend with the general population or it isn’t going to be useful for infiltrations work. I’m not sure but what it wouldn’t be better to make it a little more ‘average’ looking for that matter if all the women are panting after it.”

And exactly whom, Phil wondered, turning to study their ‘head of security’, was going to be the judge of ‘average’?

They’d designed him to be perfectly average. At five foot eleven inches, the android was average height, and he was of medium build, neither overly muscular nor underweight. He was Caucasian, so he had blue eyes. They’d decided on ash blond hair, because it went with the eye coloring and wasn’t striking enough to call attention to him. His features were very regular, but then they hadn’t wanted him to be ugly or scary looking. People would certainly remember that, and anything irregular like a large nose, prominent or receding chin, close set or deep set eyes would’ve been physical details people were more likely to remember.

He was damned if he could figure out why the women in the office were all atwitter about the android.

Unless they’d heard he was above average in the tool department?

It wasn’t as if they’d made him unusually large, but they’d figured that wasn’t an area they wanted him to be average, and certainly not *below* average. They’d wanted him to have self-confidence, after all.

“Adam,” Johnson said abruptly.

The Autonomous Dynamic Android Mercenary, or A.D.A.M. for short, seemed to go even more rigid, although he’d stood at ‘attention’ throughout the discussion. “Yes, father?”

A dull red crept under Johnson’s skin. Phil did his best to pretend he didn’t notice, but he couldn’t help but be amused at the fact that Adam persisted in referring to his ‘creator’ and the primary gene donor of his biological makeup as father.

Truthfully, despite the fact that the android had been ‘born’ in the labs of Robotics Inc., Adam was more of an enhanced human than a biologically enhanced android, but that wasn’t something anyone wanted bandied about. The government had strict regulations about playing around with genetics where human beings were concerned. If it ever got out ....

Johnson’s lips thinned, but instead of correcting Adam as he generally did, he apparently decided to ignore the title. “You can leave the surveillance tapes. I’ll go over them later and pass them along to research and development.”

\* \* \* \*

As hard as she was trying to focus on maintaining a façade of cool professionalism, Evelyn felt her heart flutter uncomfortably as the door to her boss' office opened. In her peripheral vision, she could see that the CEO, Cal Johnson, and the VP of marketing, Phil Whitmore, were standing in the door. Between the low pitch of their voices and the blood pounding against her ear drums, she couldn't hear what either man was saying, but she wasn't particularly interested anyway—not at the moment. She was far more interested in the fact that the head of security, Adam Mercury, was in her boss' office.

She didn't know what it was about the man that gave her heart palpitations, but whatever it was she was certainly not alone. As Cal Johnson's personal secretary, she didn't get the chance for a lot of interaction with the general secretarial pool any more, but she had eyes and ears. Since most of the staff behaved as if she was invisible, it wasn't hard to overhear that he was *the* hot topic and had been since he'd been hired a few months earlier. They discussed his assets. They speculated on his prowess in the bedroom, and they voiced their private fantasies about the guy—and then giggled among themselves like a bunch of teenagers.

Even if not for that, she would've known she wasn't by any means the only female at Robotics, Inc. that lusted over the man.

Whenever the guy strode through the room, he set off the 'hunk alert', and there was almost a charged air of excitement as every woman in the room tensed, pretending to be busy while they surreptitiously checked him out. And when he left the floor, there was an almost collective sigh.

She'd been fascinated with him *before* the night he'd rescued her from a would be mugger. Since then—well, she couldn't help it. She had a serious case of hero worship for the guy on top of the lust that had already been churning in her heart—and other places—for the man.

Unbidden, the memory replayed through her mind.

She had worked late, as she did at least as often as she pulled her regular shift, and she'd been distracted. She should've been paying more attention, but she'd never felt like there was any danger in the parking garage. Robotics Inc. was deadly serious about their security.

Instead of having her key card to deactivate her transport's locks in her hand like she should've, she'd stopped by the vehicle in the dim light to fumble around in her purse for it. The would be mugger had grabbed her from behind and stuck a knife to her throat. To this day she couldn't remember what he'd said to her—something to the effect that he was going to carve her up like sushi if she made a sound—not that she'd been capable of it. She'd been too terrified.

She hadn't been so deeply in shock not to realize what he had mind, though. As soon as he'd started dragging her deeper into the shadows it had registered in her mind that he was after more than her purse and/or her transport.

Her sense of self-preservation had finally kicked in when he'd removed the knife from her throat. She'd tried to break his hold on her and run. He'd decked her with his fist to her jaw, knocked her senseless. He'd been straddling her, tearing at her clothes when Adam had appeared out of no where—like a ghost—without a sound. One moment he wasn't there. The next he was standing beside the man.

He'd punched the man in the face so hard, so fast, she hadn't even seen the blow. She

didn't think the mugger had either. He hadn't ducked or even thrown up an arm to defend himself, but she knew Adam had hit him. It had lifted the man clean off her and into the air. He'd flown several feet before he hit the garage floor, skidded a few feet, and then lay so perfectly still she'd wondered if he was dead.

As gratifying as that had been—just having Adam appear and knock the man cold—he'd turned to her the moment he dispatched her attacker and crouched down to examine her for hurt. She could still remember the look on his face—part avenging fury, part concern—as he'd touched her with gentle hands, helped her to sit up. She'd thought for several moments after he'd examined her bruised face that he was going to get up again and pound the man to a pulp. He'd looked that furious.

Instead, when she'd started crying, he'd pulled her against his chest and just held her, stroking her back, murmuring soothingly to her, although she couldn't remember anything he'd said. There'd been an awkwardness to his caress that told her it wasn't something he was used to doing, which had only made it all the sweeter that he was willing to comfort her even though she could tell it made him uncomfortable. And he'd held her until she'd felt calm enough to pull away. He hadn't just patted her awkwardly and told her she was alright and shoved her away. He'd allowed her to stay within his protective, comforting embrace until she felt safe again.

She thought it was that more than anything that had helped her to overcome her terror, kept her from having nightmares about the incident. He'd given her such a strong sense of security that that part of the incident had stuck in mind much more vividly than the attack that had prompted it.

He always smiled at her whenever she saw him since then, almost as if to say he was looking out for her and she didn't have to worry. She was safe. He was there to make sure she was safe.

And, god, she wanted to wrap herself up in the man so badly she could taste it!

Trying not to be too obvious, she lifted her head and smiled politely in Phil Whitmore's general direction as he strode across the reception room and went out. He didn't acknowledge her, but then he always had behaved as if she was a piece of the furniture. Ordinarily, that would've upset her, even though she was far more focused on impressing the big boss—that was her goal, anyway, to impress the big boss, and, hopefully, if she worked her ass off, get promoted to the big league—but she barely registered the snub as she glanced oh so casually at Adam ... and discovered he was staring straight at her—studying in her a way that made her go all hot and liquid inside.

To say she was disconcerted would've been an understatement. The discovery froze her—every brain cell, every molecule in her body. She wasn't certain how long her brain functions were shut down, but she was certain what flipped her 'switch' again.

He smiled—slowly. His beautifully formed lips spread, curled upwards at the corners and then parted to show a double row of perfect white teeth and then his smile widened until soft laugh lines formed in his cheeks, the corners of his eyes crinkled, and light danced in his eyes. It lit up his entire face and was the sweetest and at the same time, the sexiest smile she'd ever seen.

She was entranced. The smile jump started her heart from a flat line to Indian war drums. Her lungs expanded, feeding desperately needed oxygen to her brain so that it began to function on at least a basic level. *Smile*, it commanded herself. *Smile* back. *Flirt* stupid! She felt quick thaw set into her face, felt her lips begin to curl.

“Ms Carlson!”

She jumped so violently she dropped the file she’d been holding in her hand. It hit the floor, scattering her paperwork in every direction. Dismay filled her. Blood poured into her cheeks, making them pulse like a flashing neon sign, the heat rising from her neck and ending in her hairline. “Yes, Mr. Johnson?”

“I need you to take a few memos.”

She quietly cleared her throat, her mouth having gone suddenly dry, trying to regain some composure. “Yes, Sir! Coming!”

She dropped to her knees, grabbing frantically at the papers and trying to cram them into the folder. A pair of large feet shod in military style boots entered her vision as she crawled along the floor. She stopped. She didn’t really want to see his expression, but she couldn’t resist the urge to look.

He dropped to a crouch in front of her just as she tipped her head up.

She tried not to look at his crotch. She really did, but it was right *there*, practically in her face, and the position he’d assumed pulled his pants taut over his muscular thighs, molding the fabric around the most perfectly lovely piece of man meat she’d seen in a very long time.

Or maybe never.

Her throat constricted as her sex sucked up every drop of moisture in her body and formed a pool of molten want low in her belly. She’d never really been ‘in’ to oral sex—certainly not with a complete stranger—but the sight of his thick cock instantly conjured a mental image of her grabbing it and stuffing it in her mouth.

She tore her gaze from it with an effort and discovered he was holding out one of her papers. The smile that curled her lips was the automatic ‘polite but not overly friendly’, but even that froze as her gaze continued upwards and connected with his.

This close, she was surprised she didn’t spontaneously combust.

He was smiling again, faintly this time, looking a little puzzled, she thought.

“My name’s Adam. When didn’t introduce ourselves ... before.”

She almost came at the sound of his voice. “I know,” she said in a throaty whisper she hardly recognized.

His brows twitched together in a faint frown. Seeing the ‘god’s’ displeasure, she searched her mind a little frantically for the cause of it. “Oh! Evelyn. My name’s Evelyn.”

The frown cleared. The smile reached his eyes. “You have your hand on my knee, Evelyn.”

She snatched her hand back as if she’d put it in fire. “I was ... uh ... reaching for the paper,” she explained hurriedly, looking away as she felt the blood pulse in her face again and trying to focus on picking up the rest of the papers. He helped her, gathering a small stack and straightening them. Her hand brushed his as she took them. She tried to ignore the way her belly tightened and her heart stuttered. “Thank you for helping me ... uh ... Mr. Mercury.”

“Adam.”

She shot him a quick glance, evading his eyes. “Thank you, Adam.”

“Ms. Carlson!”

“Yes, Mr. Johnson. Coming!” she responded, trying not to let any of the mixed emotions Adam was creating in her into her voice. She dropped the folder on her desk

and darted toward his office door.



## Chapter Two

Puzzlement dominated Adam's thought processes as he watched Evelyn scurry into his father's office. For long moments after the door had closed, he stood staring at the door, sorting his impressions and trying to make order of them so that he could understand what had just happened.

Or rather, not happened.

Frowning, he backtracked to the point where they had exited his father's office and he had seen her at her desk. She'd seemed busy, completely focused on what she was doing, but he had noticed a tension in her lithe form that didn't seem appropriate for her task.

She had smiled politely at Phil Whitmore.

He liked that about her. It was the first thing he'd noticed about Evie, as he thought of her, the thing that had caught his attention the first time he'd seen her right after he'd begun his field test. She always smiled, at everyone, and it was a pleasant smile. It made her appealingly symmetrical face even more appealing—somehow. He wasn't exactly certain how or why. He was a little surprised to realize he'd never analyzed that, that he'd merely accepted that it made him feel—good—made him want to smile back at her without even having to consider the proper counter response.

It had made him want to do more than smile at her. It had made him want to test the non-military side of his programming.

It had made him realize there was a huge gap in his programming.

He was fully versed in the technical aspects of sexual intercourse. He knew every conceivable position from the mundane to the creative and slightly bizarre. He knew every point on her body that could and should be stimulated to give her the ultimate pleasure.

He just didn't know how to get from point A to point B. He didn't know how to breach the gap from polite acquaintance to lover, but he did know that he couldn't simply walk up to her, smile, and say 'let's fuck'.

He was tempted to try it simply because he'd been struggling for weeks to figure out how to pursue it and wasn't any closer than when he'd started trying to puzzle it through.

He had not, of course. Right up until the discussion between his father and Whitmore, he had thought that his purpose was strictly to monitor security, and he had focused on that, doing his best to ignore the distractions of the many employees of Robotics Inc. around him that had nothing to do with work.

Whitmore had said that the women wanted to fuck him, though, and his father had suggested that he was flawed because he had not displayed any interest in fucking any of them, which bothered him. He had decided to see if Evie wanted to fuck him. He had worked the scenario out carefully in his mind, but had concluded from the other things he had heard and that had been programmed into him that it would not be acceptable to simply walk over to her and do it. To behave as everyone else, he must wait for an

opportunity to be alone with her.

He had still thought his first step should be to see if he could ascertain if she was receptive to having sexual intercourse with him because the only thing that he was absolutely certain of about the humans was that they were never completely accurate. They had programmed him to carefully assess facial expressions and interpret them, but they weren't good at it themselves, mostly, he thought, because as often as not, they never actually looked at the people they were talking to, or, if they did, their mind was on something else.

He had thought, perhaps, that Whitmore was right about Evie. When she had looked at him, he had seen a rapid flow of emotions expressed on her face. Color had warmed the tint of her skin, and he knew that was a blush. She had smiled at him, not merely the pleasant, friendly smile she gave everyone else. It had seemed ... different, more than merely friendly, or perhaps it was the way it made him feel that made it seem different?

Her reaction when he had smiled back had not been at all what he had anticipated, however. The faint, appealing color of her skin had darkened—with embarrassment, he realized. Her smile had wobbled and disappeared along with her bright color, and then she had dropped the folder she held in her hand.

He had felt—disconcerted, he decided, disappointed, too, because he had decided Whitmore had not meant Evie when he had said 'all' of the women wanted him to fuck them, that he had merely been making a generalization about them, a common human practice. Particularly when he had decided the moment he had looked at her when they left the meeting that he could redeem himself in his father's eyes by fucking Evie.

It was gratifying to learn that what he'd wanted to do for weeks was not only acceptable, but had been encouraged.

He had gone to help her collect the papers because he knew it was the polite thing to do, but also because he had wanted to see if he could ascertain why she did not seem interested in fucking him.

And now, instead of gathering more data that could be useful, he was only more confused. He had felt her warmth when he had crouched down to help her, a heightened warmth that told him her skin had flushed with accelerated blood flow. He had detected the faint, musky scent of arousal. He had heard her rapid heartbeat and the rush of her breath, and when she had looked up at him, he had seen that her eyes were dark with desire.

All of those things had produced the appropriate response throughout his own system so that he had not merely detected the signs of arousal within her. He had felt them himself, a mirrored reflection at first, and then *more* when she had settled her hand on his leg.

A good deal more.

It had heated him so much that he had been almost as alarmed at the rapid escalation of heat and deceleration of brain function as he was pleased to realize all systems were reacting in what was considered a 'normal' sexual response.

But then she had behaved as if she had felt none of the things he was certain he had detected, had not said anything he might interpret as encouragement, and she had not even looked back when she rushed away.

His body returned to a more or less normal state as he stood pondering the

situation. Not entirely normal. He was ... uncomfortable. He looked down at the main source of discomfort and discovered that, although the blood engorging his penis had receded with his disappointment, there was still just enough blood flowing to the member to keep it semi-erect and the counter pressure of his trousers was restricting him enough to cause the discomfort.

Part of his discomfort, anyway. His heart had not completely regained its normal rhythm, and his body felt as if every muscle was still tensed for action not taken.

He tried adjusting his penis so that the fabric was not cording him, but touching himself only sent out an unwelcome reminder through his system of what it had felt like to be fully aroused without an outlet for release.

Still baffled, feeling vaguely angry, both that he was and because he felt, somehow, that he had failed a behavioral test, he left the office, still trying to decide if he had completely misinterpreted the 'signals' he had intercepted from Evie and what they had meant if he had. A lot of his continuing confusion lay in understanding why some things were felt but not said. Where was the line drawn between desire and action? Should he approach one of the other women and ask them to fuck, he wondered? Would that be expected? Would it prove there was nothing faulty in his programming? Or would that, again, be a failure because his father and Whitmore would think that he had only done it because they had suggested it?

Which, he concluded uncomfortably, was the main reason he *was* contemplating it, because it had not occurred to him before to test the full range of his capabilities in sexual intercourse before ... except with Evie. He had thought nothing more was expected of him, or acceptable, than to mimic the behavior of those around him so that they did not suspect he was not one of them. All the employees had been working, so he had followed suit. He had not seen them fucking one another around the office.

He had heard them talk about it, though.

He had wondered what it would 'feel' like when he had emerged from the lab and felt an awakening of the senses he had been given and discovered he found a good bit of it pleasurable. Everything he had heard, their very focus on it almost as if it was the central core of their existence, had led him to suspect that it was the peak of all things pleasurable.

He *had* wanted to know what it was like, he realized after a while, but he had thought it was forbidden to him, since his main programming suggested his primary functions were to obey direct orders. He had feared, since he had no experience of it, only his programming, that he would not be able to maintain his façade of being a 'real' human, and he knew *that* would displease his father.

\* \* \* \*

The emotional 'high' Evelyn had begun the night with had plateaued and begun a slow descent toward depression. It had seemed to her when she had rushed home for a quick respite before she pulled yet another 'all nighter' that fate had smiled upon her.

It was her birthday.

Mr. Johnson had handed her an extremely important file to compile into a report for him.

And security chief, Adam Mercury was *also* pulling the late shift.

It was not until she had hit the shower at a dead run than it had dawned on her that she would be virtually *alone* in the building with Adam and all sorts of possibilities had

immediately presented themselves to her.

She was obliged to admit that there might have been a lot more imagination at work than actuality, but it seemed to her that he had shown a good deal of interest in her since the day she had embarrassed herself by coming apart at the seams only because he had smiled at her. She had caught him studying her speculatively several times since.

Of course, he might just have been trying to figure out why she had been so rattled over nothing more than a friendly smile, but she could dream, couldn't she?

She decided she could.

She decided she could do more than dream—for once in her life!

She was thirty. That realization had depressed the hell out of her, and not just because thirty was not 'young' anymore—not that it was old, but twenty anything sounded youthful and thirty something was beyond the blush, no matter how one diced it.

More importantly, and depressingly, she realized she had almost nothing to show for it. She had no husband, no children—no family at all anymore. She had dedicated her 'youth' to the struggle to achieve, and she was still no more than a glorified secretary. At a higher pay scale than the typical woman in the secretarial pool, granted, trusted with far more important tasks, but still just a secretary despite her certainty that she was on her way 'up' when she had landed the position as Mr. Johnson's executive assistant three years earlier.

She had decided as she had showered to freshen up that she was going to make a push to take her life beyond the ordinary. For once in her life, she was going to aggressively pursue something she wanted instead of just looking at it wistfully and wishing she had the nerve to go for it.

She was going to seduce Adam.

She wasn't certain where the idea had come from. She had never even contemplated attempting to be the aggressor in any sexual situation before.

Unless it was just the fact that her sex drive, ignored and pushed aside for years for 'serious' goals, had finally hit the limit of endurance and Adam had pushed her over the edge.

Or maybe it was just that, now that she had turned thirty, she had woken up to the fact that it was all going to be down hill from here? Maybe it was the fear that she was facing a decline in desirability with every day that passed when she had never exactly been a man magnet even when she was *young* and relatively pretty.

Maybe it was just that she was fed up with pining over Adam and doing nothing about it and it had finally been driven home that *he* wasn't going to take the initiative and she was never going to find out what it was really like to be with him if she didn't go for it. She was going to be stuck with fantasizing and never actually experiencing.

She decided not to examine it too closely.

She wasn't certain how she was going to go about it, but she decided to 'arm' herself with whatever she could to boost her feminine confidence.

So, instead of a quick shower and a quick meal, she had spent her time primping--bathing, shampooing her hair, shaving everything, slathering lotion over her skin—and then she had emptied her lingerie drawer in search of the sexy bits of lacey under things she had bought and never quite gotten up the nerve to wear.

It made her feel—revved for sex to put them on. She resolutely refused to look in the mirror to see if it looked as sexy on her as it felt. There was no sense in deflating her

ego before she got the chance to put the underwear to the test, she reasoned.

She topped it off with a short skirt and clingy, scooped neck top she would not have dared wear to the office at any other time and then finished up with a pair of thigh high nylons.

Checking the mirror finally for the effect, she decided to wear her hair down for a change. Generally, she wore it pulled back in a neat, 'professional' chignon at the back of her head, but she thought leaving the dark, wavy mass loose around her face made her look more youthful—more approachable—she hoped.

She had been buzzing with anticipation when she had arrived back at the office. The security guard that had buzzed her in had done a double take when he had glanced at her.

It had unnerved her, made her wonder if it was from appreciation or because she *looked* like she was trolling to get laid. She worried her bottom lip with her teeth for a moment.

If the latter was the case, was that a good thing or a bad thing?

Would Adam notice—in a good way?

She had been so excited through the first few hours that it had taken all she could do to try to concentrate on her work. Her fingers had shaken so badly she could hardly focus on anything beyond her quaking—and the dampness of her panties. She had been determined, though, to finish the report that had brought her to the office and get it out of the way so that she could focus on Adam when he made his rounds.

And she had succeeded, in record time.

And she still had not seen a sign of Adam.

Glancing around the empty conference room when she set the report aside, she realized couldn't think of anything to do to dawdle a little longer.

She had brought her supper with her since she hadn't taken the time to eat at home, but her stomach was so tied in knots with nerves she could hardly choke down more than a few bites. She spent most of her time crumbling her sandwich and chips into smaller and smaller particles until it finally dawned on her that she was making a huge mess on Mr. Johnson's conference table.

Feeling weariness descend upon her abruptly, she got up, grabbed a small trashcan, and scooped the remains and the crumbs from the smooth table top. Setting the container aside when she had finished cleaning, she took out the cupcake she had made for herself and stabbed the single candle she had brought with it into the center. A long, disappointed sigh escaped her as she stared at it.

She was going to spend her birthday alone—again.

Glumly, she pulled the lighter out of her purse that she had brought to light the candle with and held the flame to the wick until it caught.

She had just leaned down to set the cupcake on the conference table when she heard the door open behind her.

She froze, her heart tripping over itself and abruptly thundering in her ears so loudly she had to strain to listen to see if whoever it was had entered the room or merely opened the door, looked in, and gone away again.

She was too frozen, at first, to realize she had stilled in a completely unnatural position. Slowly thaw set in and her mind assessed.

She was bent over the conference table as if she was just waiting to be humped.

She could feel a breath of cool wafting across her bare buttocks, exposed by her lacy thong and short skirt.

It took an effort to turn her head to look to see if anyone was still there, and if it was who she hoped it was.

Adam was standing just inside the door, looking as frozen as she was, his gaze locked on her ass, which she realized abruptly was almost fully exposed by her position since her short skirt had risen halfway up her hips.

She began to feel cramped from her position.

She could not decide whether to straighten and approach him or stay as she was.

Her throat closed at the thought, as if someone had wrapped their hand around it and squeezed, partly with sudden fear and doubt of the thoughts rambling disjointedly around in her mind, and partly with the upsurge of desire that flooded her.

Apparently becoming aware that she was staring at him, he lifted his gaze as if with great effort and settled it on her face.

The slight movement unfroze her sufficiently to allow her to straighten. She lifted the cupcake and held it up. "It's my birthday," she said, uttering the first thing that came to mind. "I was thinking ... I was wondering ... I was really hoping to get laid," she said baldly even while she cringed inwardly that the seduction scenario she had so carefully orchestrated in her imagination had completely deserted her.

### Chapter Three

Adam discovered his heart was thundering so loudly in his ears that it garbled most of what she said. He heard the last clearly enough, though, and instantly translated the slang.

She wanted him to fuck her.

He had reached her before his mind had even fully assimilated the meaning.

His body had completely comprehended, however. It had risen to a state of readiness the moment he had stepped through the door and seen her bent over the conference table, the instant his gaze had homed in on the creamy, rounded cheeks of her ass. His blood was already surging, pounding out a rhythm inside of him in a demand he had no difficulty at all interpreting as extreme sexual arousal.

Not that his brain had alerted him to that fact. It seemed to have all but shut down, lost the capability of processing anything beyond the urge to fuck—and the knowledge that the security cameras were bound to catch the entire act, but he was only peripherally aware of that.

She stared at him wide eyed when he stopped in front of her, struggling to assess the situation and her reaction.

Desire, he wondered?

Fear?

She was still holding the lit candle. Grabbing it from her limp hand, he slammed it onto the conference table without even glancing in that direction. A vague awareness flickered through him of heat as his hand extinguished the flame, and an unpleasant stickiness as his hand came down on it, but he was only dimly aware of it. His mind was fully occupied with sorting and discarding various sexual positions.

Sloughing off the stickiness on the leg of his trousers when he realized all of his senses were registering mutual arousal, he grabbed her shoulders and dragged her against his chest. The softness of her body as it melded against his instantly registered in his mind, producing more waves of excitement but also a warning.

She was soft, fragile—a human.

His data processing capabilities had gone haywire with the heat sizzling through his circuits, however. He had already gripped her hair in his fist, snatched her head back, and clamped his mouth over hers for ‘the kiss’ before the processing caught up with his actions. He was not certain if it would have then except she made a soft, mewling sound that penetrated the red haze rampaging through him.

Protest? Pain? Acceptance?

He speared his tongue into her mouth to determine which.

She touched her tongue to his, and his sensors short-circuited. His brain seemed to shut down completely as pleasure engulfed him. Evie, he thought, as he felt the heat of her mouth, the texture of her tongue against his, her taste, cataloguing everything beside the name.

He jogged his memory a little desperately, trying to think what came next, but for

many moments he was so enthralled with the feel of her pliant flesh against his body and her taste in his mouth that he could not seem to move past that. The painful throbbing in his groin and the realization that he had been pumping his hips against her mindlessly finally produced the memory that he was supposed to insert his penis into her body and stroke the walls of her sex to bring her to culmination. It took him several moments more to assess the fact that he could not do so until he removed the barrier that his clothes represented, and he discovered that he had ‘forgotten’ how to do so. He was reluctant to loosen his grip on her even when he finally remembered, and when the need to accomplish his goal finally outweighed the desire to hold her tightly against him, he discovered that he had lost the dexterity of his hand to accomplish it.

The memory of her tempting white buttocks flashed in his mind. Breaking the kiss, he turned her and pushed her down on the table as she had been before, freed his painfully swollen member from his pants, and dove for the hole he *needed* to shove his penis into, only to discover yet another barrier.

That one threatened to completely defeat him until he finally realized it was not her body, but her clothing. Deciding he was not currently capable of figuring out how to remove it in the accepted manner, he grasped the thin wedge of fabric and ripped it off.

She made a whimpering noise as he plowed along her cleft, searching blindly for the hole, the entrance to the warm, wet channel that would envelop his member.

Wet, he remembered belatedly. It had to be wet or his skin would cling to hers.

He stroked a hand along her cleft until he found the place and pushed a finger inside of her.

Hot moisture coated his finger instantly, and relief filled him—and blinding need.

Grasping his member, he aligned it and pressed inside of her.

He was not prepared for the feeling. Everything intensified the instant he felt her flesh close around his penis. His heart, already pumping so fast it made him dizzy, began to surge almost painfully against his chest wall. “Evie,” he murmured aloud, his voice sounding strangely hoarse to his ears as he carefully catalogued these new sensations. This was Evie. This was how Evie felt, smelled, tasted....

The pleasure was so excruciating he was not certain for several moments after he had engaged his body fully with hers if what he was feeling was pain or pleasure.

He decided to assess it later as his hips began to move almost of their own accord, pumping in a way that sawed his engorged member in and out, back and forth along her wet channel, sending out fresh, harder waves of sensation with every movement.

‘The caress’, he remembered abruptly.

He had completely forgotten the caress in his desperation to get his penis inside of her. His brain worked sluggishly, however, when it worked at all, in fits and spurts as if the heat burning him up had soldered random wires together, burned others in two. He groped her blindly in a belated attempt to stimulate her by caress, finding the swaying globes of her breasts almost by accident.

She moaned as he pinched the tip of one between his fingers.

The sound scraped along his nerve endings like finger nails, raising the heat level inside of him.

Abruptly, she stiffened beneath him, uttered a long, low groan that rose in pitch until it was nearly a scream as her body began to shake and jerk convulsively.

And then she went limp.



The scream and her sudden limpness penetrated the steaming fog in his mind like nothing else, pierced it with a sudden coldness. He stopped abruptly, heaving for breath, trying to fight the sudden fear that he had done something terribly wrong.

His own body screamed in protest as he withdrew from her, but despite that, despite the fact that he had managed to find a thready pulse, his uneasiness grew when she continued to lay sprawled against the table as if he had sucked the life out of her.

She dragged in a shaky breath as he stepped back and guiltily shoved his stiff penis back into his pants. Finally, she lifted her head and looked back at him.

He could not tell anything from her expression.

He did not believe he had hurt her, though.

He didn't think.

He could not think. The blood was still roiling through his veins and pounding in his skull so hard his thought processes were a rioting mess. "Thank you," he mumbled, dimly aware that some comment was necessary and latching upon the first polite phrase that popped into his mind.

The look that crossed her features then so completely disconcerted him that he whirled on his heel and retreated.

\* \* \* \*

Evelyn stared at the door blankly when Adam disappeared through it, a chill washing over her that wiped out the lingering heat from her climax so abruptly she shivered.

Pushing herself up with an effort, she thrust her hair from her face as she turned toward the door. "Thank you?" she murmured in disbelief.

Still weak in the aftermath of the most mind blowing climax she had ever had in her life, she plunked her hips on the table behind her. It was as she crossed her arms over her chest to hold in some of the rapidly escaping warmth from her body that she discovered he had shoved her down on the table on top of her birthday cupcake. She stared down at the mess in dismay, trying to wrap her mind around what had happened.

The urge to cry hit her out of nowhere.

She had no idea where it had come from or why she suddenly felt so crushed, but she had to fight the sting of tears in her nose and eyes and the wobble that developed in her chin as she brushed at the crushed cake and icing smeared on her shirt.

Realizing after a few moments that she was only making things worse, she firmly pushed everything to the back of her mind and focused on cleaning up the mess, unwilling to leave a sign of a crumb behind to point at her guilt.

Grabbing up her belongings and the report she had finished shortly before Adam's arrival, she dashed to the first ladies lounge and used a damp paper towel to remove as much of the chocolate icing as she could. She had already dropped the report on her boss' desk and fled into the elevator before it dawned on her that, somewhere in the rounds, she had lost her panties.

She might not have noticed it then except for the tickle when her legs rubbed together.

She did not even remember taking them off.

Then she *did* remember—not taking them off, but Adam snapping the thin waistband.

It had thrilled her at the time, excited her that he had been so anxious to possess

her he had not wanted to wait.

Except *he* hadn't come.

She did not have to feel between her legs to know he hadn't.

He had pulled out—she thought to keep from coming inside of her, but he hadn't come at all.

The tears she had been working so hard to suppress welled in her eyes and ran down her cheeks. Dashing them off with her hand, she began to stab at the elevator buttons frantically. Finally, it stopped, and she hit the button to go back up.

There was no sign of her panties, she discovered in dismay. She even got down on her hands and knees and crawled around under the conference table to search for them, checked every chair, scanned the entire room.

The last coherent thought she'd had was of her ripped panties slipping down one leg and pooling at her ankle. She had kicked them off. They should be under the conference table, but there was no getting around the fact that they weren't.

She did *not* want to leave without them, but although she searched until she was ready to flop on the floor and squall, she couldn't find them.

Trying to assure herself that if she couldn't, nobody else would, and that they would never believe it was her panties even if they *did* find them, she clutched her belongings against her chest and trudged to the elevator again.

She didn't even think about the security guard on the first floor until the elevator signaled it had landed and the doors began to open. Frantically smoothing her hair and straightening her clothes, she clutched her belongings more tightly to her and marched toward the door stiffly erect, praying her bare ass wasn't hanging out from beneath her skirt.

"Rough night, huh?"

Feeling her face heat, Evelyn threw the guard a distracted, wobbly smile. "A little, but I finished the report!" she called as she rushed toward the exit.

No amount of reasoning with herself had the least effect, Evelyn discovered when she got home and climbed into her cold, lonely bed. As many times as she told herself that she had gotten exactly what she wanted, she still felt used and discarded and wept until finally, completely exhausted, she fell asleep.

She woke feeling worse. Her head was pounding so hard from half a night of weeping inconsolably that she could barely function. A hot shower relieved some of the ache from congestion and the sore muscles from the unaccustomed 'activity' the night before. A cold compress reduced some of the swelling in her eyes.

By the time she had sipped down her coffee, she wasn't depressed anymore. She was thoroughly pissed off.

The jerk! The asshole! The sorry, low down son-of-a-bitch! If he hadn't wanted her, why not just *say* so? Why fuck her at all and then just stroll out as if completely unmoved by the experience?

Which he had been, because he hadn't even come!

Was it just to make her feel pathetic?

## Chapter Four

Adam could not sleep. Uneasiness permeated his entire being. He was disturbed on so many levels that the fact that he *was* disturbed him almost more than the cause of his distress.

He had not been taught to expect anything that had happened.

He still was not entirely certain what *had* happened, but the fear that he had malfunctioned, was suffering a complete breakdown of circuitry and programming, had sent him hurrying toward the lab as soon as his mind had cleared enough for that possibility to present itself. The same fear, compounded by another, nameless one, had halted him before he had gotten there.

Self preservation, he realized. They would destroy him if they discovered how erratically he was thinking and behaving, not fix him, not explain to him why he was feeling things he had never been designed to feel.

It was a while before he even realized that much. He had replayed what had happened in his mind between him and Evie over and over, compared it to his programming to ferret out every flaw in his behavior and actions and analyzed his failure to perform as anticipated for hours before it had dawned on him that he had *felt* everything. He had not been programmed to feel, only to simulate it. He had been designed and programmed to *emulate* life, not feel. His sensors were highly sensitive, but designed to report their findings to his CPU to be analyzed so that he could articulate the correct response.

He had not been able to analyze anything, however, or call up his programming for the correct response, because he had *felt*, and that had deprived him of the ability to behave logically when he should not have been able to do anything else.

As much as that disturbed him, he was even more distressed about the results of his inability to call up his programmed behavior and act it out.

Evie must know he was not a man—not a real man.

He had not done anything he was supposed to do after ‘the kiss’. He wasn’t sure he had even performed the kiss correctly once he had finally cooled down enough that his brain began to function more normally.

He had panicked when she had climaxed, been completely incapable of recognizing it for what it was—because he knew he was malfunctioning and the first thought to run through his mind was that he had gone berserk and broken her. He recalled noting the fact that she was human, and fragile, at one point, but that knowledge should have tinted every thought and action thereafter, and it hadn’t because he had ‘forgotten’ it just as he had forgotten *all* of the steps of stimulation that were supposed to *precede* penetration.

She had come, though. He was relieved about that much in the beginning, thinking that his father must be appeased by that. He had acted upon the situation and fucked her, and she had come.

Would it be obvious, though, that he had not done anything right, he wondered?

Would it look like two humans fucking? Or would it look like an android fucking a human?

Unable to shake the fear that the security vids, instead of vindicating him, would condemn him, he had gone to the control booth and called up the vid. He had watched it over and over, convinced the first time—and relieved—that it appeared very much like the images of copulation that had been implanted in his mind. He could see nothing inhuman or mechanical about his behavior.

Nothing.

Because he had not been behaving according to pre-establish protocols. He had been *reacting* to stimulus.

He began to worry next that his father and the others would realize he was not simulating, that he actually *was* out of control.

He had dismissed his fears, though, when his focus had shifted to Evie.

Everything he had felt at the time came back in aching detail.

And more.

Possessiveness, his mind finally interpreted the emotion that welled inside of him.

Reluctance.

For the first time he considered destroying the vid, not from self-preservation, but because he abruptly knew he did not want anyone else watching Evie, did not want anyone to see the beauty of her face as it was transformed by pleasure, hear her cries of delight when she came.

It was for him. It was his. Evie was his.

He hadn't come. Once he had managed to get past everything that had been worrying him, had managed to convince himself that he had not actually malfunctioned, he realized that the reason he was still miserable and aching and unable to put any of it completely from his mind was because he had not achieved orgasm. Everything had built up inside of him toward an explosive release and then he had withdrawn, leaving his body on high alert and unable to come down to a comfortable level.

He needed Evie for relief.

He had left Robotics Inc. and found his way to her home.

It was the second time in the space of a few hours that he had considered rebelling against his programming, except that this time he had done it.

They would know if he destroyed the security vid that no one else could have done it, and they would begin to question whether he was dangerous to them or not.

If they found out he had left the building, they would not be in any doubt any longer, but unlike the situation with the vid, he'd been able to cover that. They would not know that he had accessed employee records specifically to find her, because that was part of his job as head of security—investigating all of the employees. And they would not know he had left the building because he had taken care to avoid all of the security cameras on the way out and back in.

Despite the fit of rebellion, though, in spite of the fact that he had fully intended, when he left, to approach her and ask if she would fuck him again and give him relief, he had not been able to come up with a scenario he thought would convince her.

Because then he had remembered the way she had looked at him when he left.

Beyond the discomfort of having a body that refused to return to a normal state of non-arousal, let alone rest, Adam discovered he could not sleep for the unfamiliar emotions

roiling through him, could not analyze and fully categorize them, could not stop feeling them. He knew he had to, though, because he could not afford to seek help from either his father or the lab techs to deal with them because he also knew they would destroy him if they had any inkling he had passed beyond mere simulation of human emotions.

\* \* \*

Her boss knew. There was something about the way he looked at her that she could not quite pen down that told her he knew.

Maybe it was just the fact that he actually looked *at* her and not through her?

Evelyn did not delude herself into thinking it was the report, although he was almost effusive in his praise of a job well done.

Or maybe it was the fact that he had called Adam Mercury to his office mid-morning?

Her heart had leapt into her throat and threatened to choke her when she had glanced up as the door opened and saw who it was that had entered the reception area. Panic followed, then anger, then panic again. It had taken every ounce of self-control she could muster to even attempt to behave professionally. She knew the false smile she managed to paste on her lips must look as insincere as it felt, but she didn't care if it did.

She *hoped* he realized she was intentionally giving him the cold shoulder.

She could not quite get up enough nerve to meet his gaze, though, to see if it had had the desired effect.

She could feel him staring at her as he waited for Mr. Johnson to call him in to his office.

She *thought* she could feel it. She could not bring herself to look at him to see if it was just her imagination or not.

Relief flooded her when he disappeared into Mr. Johnson's office at last.

She had just managed to achieve a more or less normal heart rhythm when he left the office again.

He paused in front of her desk.

She flicked a quick look at his crotch, which was almost eye level with her, and returned her attention to her books. "Did you need another appointment set up?" she asked coolly, without looking up.

"Evie."

His voice was low, expelled on a ragged exhalation of breath.

She couldn't breathe at all for a moment. "Evelyn," she croaked finally, correcting him, determined to ignore the fact that her insides had gone all weak and watery when he had said her name—from the way he had said it.

He shifted, obviously uncomfortable.

Good!

"Did I hurt you?"

She felt her face redden until it felt like it would burst into flames. She flicked a quick look up at him and then down again. "Now's the time to ask," she retorted in an angry hiss. "But, no. You didn't. Why don't we just pretend it didn't happen?"

He said nothing for several moments. "Why?"

Instead of responding to the question hanging between them like dirty laundry, she suddenly remembered her missing panties. "Do you have my panties?" she asked quietly through gritted teeth.

He shoved a hand in his pocket and dragged them out. She stared in horror at the black lace swinging from one finger. Snatching them from him, she quickly stuffed them into the lower drawer of her desk next to her purse.

He stood in front of her desk for several moments more and finally turned and left. Relief warred with anger and the urge to burst into tears as she surreptitiously watched him leave.

"Asshole," she muttered under her breath, wishing she hadn't been so tongue tied she could have given him a thorough tongue lashing. "Why, he asks."

Why had he asked why, she wondered abruptly. Wasn't it obvious *why* she wanted to put it behind her and forget it?

Why would he want it any other way, particularly since he hadn't gotten anything out of it to start with?

*Because* he hadn't, she decided. He wanted another shot at it!

On a cold day in hell, maybe!

\* \* \* \*

It was nothing short of amazing, Evelyn thought three days later when she ducked into the nearest office to avoid meeting up with Adam in the hallway. In all the time he had worked at Robotics Inc. she had rarely seen him—just a tantalizing glimpse from time to time, maybe on the elevator, passing through Mr. Johnson's office suite—never enough to fulfill the yearning she had for the man. Now, when she all she wanted to do was to avoid him, she saw him a half a dozen times a day.

If she hadn't known better, she would have thought the man was stalking her!

Ignoring the curious stares of the people inside the office she had chosen to hide in, she waited until she thought he'd had time to vanish on his rounds and then peered out into the corridor cautiously. Seeing no sign of Adam, she released a sigh of relief and headed back to her office, glancing at her watch to see if the detour had made her late.

She had just congratulated herself on making it with ten minutes to spare when the door to the stairwell opened nearly beside her. Her head swiveled automatically in that direction to see who had come out of the stairs.

Adam, a determined set to his jaw, was standing in the door. Even as her jaw slid to half mast, he grabbed her wrist and gave her a yank that snatched her through the door. The door banged shut behind her, but she barely registered it.

"Why are you hiding from me?" he demanded, his expression a mixture of confusion and anger.

Evelyn felt her face heat. "I wasn't hiding," she lied.

A thick blond brow rose in disbelief, but doubt flickered in his eyes. "You're lying," he said finally.

Evelyn glared at him indignantly. "Alright!" she snapped. "So I was avoiding you."

"Why?"

"Because I don't want to talk about it, and I had the distinct impression you did!"

Frustration creased his handsome features. "I need to know why."

"Why?"

"Yes."

"I mean, why do you feel a need to know why?" she demanded. "Obviously it didn't mean a damned thing to you! You didn't even get anything out of it. I'd think you

would be avoiding me instead off the other way around!”

He seemed to think that over for several moments, his brow furrowing. “You’re angry because I didn’t come?”

“Don’t *even* go there! That wasn’t my fault!”

His complexion reddened. “No. It wasn’t.” He looked uncomfortable. “I thought I’d hurt you.”

Evelyn gaped at him, trying to wrap her mind around it. “Oh, yeah—good one. So now you want to take up where we left off?”

“Yes...thank you.”

Evelyn sent him a look of disbelief. “No—Thank *you*. You thanked me last time, remember? And the answer is no! I’m good for the next millennia, thank you very much, and if you’re not that’s just too damned bad! You had your chance, and you blew it!”

He caught her arm as she turned away from him and grabbed the door lever, pulling her hand free and whirling her to face him again. “I’ll do better this time.”

“No, you won’t! Because there isn’t going to be a...”

He planted his mouth squarely over hers in the midst of her diatribe, cutting her off mid sentence. Her back bumped against the door as he shifted closer, pressing against her. Dizziness swept through her as their mouths connected. The urgency of his touch, the heat of his mouth, sent a jolt of electricity spiraling through her to form a molten pool in her sex.

He had the perfect mouth, she thought hazily—not too big, not too hard, not too wet—and he knew how to use it. He tasted absolutely divine. The heated stroke of his tongue along hers felt like heaven, made her entire body clench with need.

She could drown in the sea of bliss he created with no more than the caress of his mouth, could go on kissing him forever.

Unfortunately, the ‘forever’ thought kick started her brain again.

She was due back at her desk.

They were standing in the stairwell, for god’s sake, in the middle of the work day!

She pushed at him as he came up for air and transferred his attention from her mouth to her throat and neck and ear. “No, Adam!” she gasped weakly, pushing at him ineffectually. “Somebody will see.”

“Not here,” he muttered, obviously completely focused on his quest to explore her collar bone, which brought her to the realization that he had unbuttoned her blouse to the waistband of her skirt.

She ducked away from him, managing to free herself from the cage of his body and the door. His expression as she backed toward the stairs was filled with need, his eyes glazed with it. Her body responded, flushing with more heat, but she shook her head resolutely. “I know it was my idea the last time,” she said shakily, “and I’ve got no right to complain, but I don’t like being used and discarded, Adam Mercury. Find somebody else.”

He shook his head, advancing on her. “I don’t want anyone else, Evie. I want you.”

Anger flared as he caught her, pulling her close again. “You’re saying that because you want to fuck me. You don’t mean it.”

Confusion flickered across his features, but he dismissed whatever doubts plagued

him, swooping to capture her mouth again, no doubt because he knew she was lost if he started kissing her again.



## Chapter Five

The heel of her shoe, Evelyn discovered as she tried to evade him again, was against the lowest stair. She tipped backwards, sucking in a sharp gasp as she felt herself falling. He caught her, somehow slowing, cushioning her fall as he followed her down and then used his superior position to his advantage. His knee slipped between her sprawled thighs, making it impossible to clamp them together again.

She might have tried anyway except that he scooped one breast from the cup of her bra in almost the same movement, covering it with the heat of his mouth and turning her brain to mush as he sucked the turgid tip. For a moment, she struggled against the rising tide of desire, shoving against him and trying to wiggle out from under him, but the pleasure won out over reason and the hurt anger that still simmered beneath the surface.

His panting breaths as he released her tortured flesh and moved to her other breast made her skin pebble. She shivered as cool air caressed the damp nipple he had released, sucked in a sharp breath as he caught the other in his mouth and sucked it. Her womb contracted at the tug of his mouth. Moisture gushed into her channel, slickening the walls of her sex.

She wasn't even aware he had reached beneath her skirt until she felt his hand glide between his knee and her sex, felt his hand coast lightly across her silk panties before he reached for the crotch and shoved it out of his way.

"Don't you dare tear..." She broke off, uttering a choked grunt as he found the mouth of her sex with his finger and pushed it inside of her. "Adam!" she gasped when she could catch her breath, surging mindlessly against his hand as he stroked her with his finger.

He withdrew it. Moving above her, he leaned down to kiss her, supporting himself with one arm while he tugged at the opening of his trousers with the other. She felt the rounded head of his cock pressing into her opening, breaching the clinging flesh, sliding deeply inside of her.

She dug her nails into his arms as he surged into her, gasping at the wealth of sensations that pelted her. Withdrawing until he was almost free of her channel, he thrust again, a slow, sweeping stroke that caressed her channel from beginning to end and set off waves of intense pleasure that had her shaking within moments, quivering with the rising need.

As if he sensed her imminent release, he began to move faster, bringing the shocks of pleasure closer and closer together until she was panting for breath. He began to shake as she came, and her passage clenched tightly around his cock. A shudder went through him and then a harder one. Collapsing against her, he groaned, jerking as his seed spilled into her.

Discomfort roused her from her sated bliss far more quickly than he recovered, and as it did, full awareness returned. She stared up at the zigzagging stairs above her, felt the grit of dirt beneath her buttocks, the cold of the concrete stairs, and the ridge of

the one stair digging into her back. Shoving at his shoulder, she pushed until he grunted and moved off of her.

“You inconsiderate asshole!” she growled. “Well! I hope you’re happy! Now I’m dripping cum, and I’ve got to go back to work—and I’m late!”

“Evie,” he groaned weakly, reaching for her, trying to catch her hand. “Don’t ....”

She slapped his hand away and evaded him, trying to right her clothes as she scrambled back down the stairs. “Now we’re even,” she said tightly when she had grabbed the lever on the door.

\* \* \* \*

Too weak to move, Adam stared at the door in consternation as she slipped through it and disappeared, wondering dimly what he had done wrong this time.

He was in no state to try to understand the intricacies of human emotions at the moment. His brain was too sluggish to provide much more than life support. He felt completely drained of energy. The weakness alarmed him. He could not believe it was a natural side effect of sexual intercourse and lay wondering for some minutes if he would continue to decline until his heart simply stopped.

It ceased to pound frantically after a short time, and, although he still felt more inclined to sleep, he discovered he had recovered enough strength to push himself upright.

It was as he reached down to tuck his flaccid member back into his trousers that it finally rang through his head what Evelyn had snarled at him about.

He had climaxed, spilled his seed into her.

He stared at his member blankly for several moments.

Simulated, he wondered? Or real?

The latter seemed unlikely, despite the fact that he knew he was constructed of more biological materials than synthetics and metal. He was still an android, not real.

Anger flickered to life inside him then.

*Why* was he not real, he wondered abruptly?

He felt...everything.

He did not know, exactly, when he had begun to feel the emotions he so carefully noted among the humans and emulated, but he had. Hydraulics controlled his titanium skeletal system, but blood flowed through the biologicals—he bled. Nerves fed signals to the biological part of his brain, even though electronic sensors sent data to his CPU. He was more than half biological.

What constituted being human?

He had not been born of mankind.

And he would not, could not ever produce young of his own.

The anger flared again, but a tightness swelled in his throat that he recognized as sorrow.

He had not given Evie his seed, only the lifeless lubricant that should have carried it. He could give her pleasure. He could take pleasure from the release that came from fucking Evie, but the painful truth was it was still an emulation of humans. He could not procreate, which was the main purpose of sexual intercourse. It was merely incidental that it was *also* pleasurable.

He should have thought about the discomfort Evie would feel afterward, he realized, but then he had not come before. He had not really thought beyond the need to find release and try to make her happy so that she would not be angry with him any more.

He was almost regretful, now, that he had decided to have sex with her. Before, she had always smiled at him and spoken to him pleasantly. Before, she had looked at him in a way that made him feel good. Now she would not look at him at all except angrily.

He got up finally, straightened his clothes, and returned to his tasks because he did not know what else to do, but he pondered the problem of Evie as he went about his job, sifting, collating, comparing the situation with the scenarios in his data banks.

By the time the day shift was over, he had come to several conclusions.

He needed Evie. Even if he was only a machine, he was miserable because he had somehow made her unhappy, and he could not bear to think of simply leaving it that way. He had to try to find out what he had done to make her unhappy and fix it.

He wanted Evie, because, android or not, he desired her and no one else. It was no longer about proving to his father that he was worthy of his approval. It was about Evie, the way she made him feel, the way it made him feel to give her pleasure.

The misery he felt when she shunned him.

She did not want to talk to him while she was working, and, truthfully, there were very few places where it would be safe for him to try to talk to her.

He would go to her home, he decided. He could not tell her what he was. If he did, she would behave toward him as his father did and all the others who knew what he was, and he did not think he could bear if Evie looked at him that way. But he would find a way to make her understand that he had not intentionally made her unhappy. He just did not understand what he had done that had. If she would just explain it to him, he would make it right.

\* \* \* \*

Thinking back—which she had not *wanted* to do before—it occurred to Evelyn to wonder if she had misjudged Adam. She supposed she should have considered whether or not she was jumping to conclusions right off, but she had been too upset to think clearly, too wrapped up in her own feelings to consider his. She realized once she had allowed herself to resurrect the memory, though, that Adam had looked upset and confused when he had left that night, not cold and indifferent, and certainly not gloating. Had she misjudged him? Had she actually seen the hurt and confusion she now thought she had? Or was she just remembering it that way now because she wanted to believe what he had told her, that he had stopped because he was afraid he had hurt her?

She had pined over the man almost from the time he had first been introduced as the new head of security. Unfortunately, she knew pretty much every other woman in the office had, too, and she realized that that had colored her perception of what had happened between her and Adam—that and her own insecurities.

He had seemed completely sincere, though, when he had explained leaving so abruptly that night. He had looked both uncomfortable and embarrassed at the confession. Would he have felt that way if, as she had first assumed, he had only had sex with her to humiliate or somehow punish her for bothering him? Maybe even as a lesson to the women of the office in general who were no doubt driving him crazy panting after him? If he was like that, would it even occur to him that he *should* be embarrassed and ashamed?

She didn't think so, and she was obliged to admit she had not gotten the impression, before, that he was that kind of person. She had thought he was shy.

Every time she smiled at him, he smiled back, but then his gaze would slide away in a

way she had interpreted as bashful. He certainly was not oblivious to the attention he got whenever he strode through the offices of Robotics Inc. and she knew if he had taken any of the other women up on their offers, the gossip would have spread through the building like wildfire.

That was why she had concluded that he was shy—with women.

She had actually worried that he might be gay because he ignored the women—and it had occurred to her after they'd had sex that that might have been the reason he had pulled out without finding his own release, but it had never really fit. He had been so—passionate up until that moment that it had shot her own excitement through the roof, made her come so fast she had barely gotten the chance to enjoy it. And, although he seemed more comfortable around the men, and the men looked up to him, she had not actually seen anything to indicate he was more interested, sexually, in men than women. So, maybe she was right about him to start with and he was shy?

Inexperienced?

That was hard to swallow even though she wanted to.

He was just too gorgeous. In their office alone he'd had a zillion opportunities. Shy or not, he would have been jumped by plenty of women even if he was too shy to initiate. Some of it just did not fit, no matter how hard she worked to make it fit. He had seemed sincere, and she didn't think she was making things up in her mind about him, so he had been worried and upset that night—about something. If it wasn't actually concern that he had hurt her, and she didn't see how that could be the case unless he had had *no* prior experience—maybe he had been worried about it getting out that they'd had sex on the conference table?

That didn't really seem to fit either.

She gave up on trying to figure it out after a while and turned her mind to trying to decide what the incident in the stairwell constituted—besides wild, deeply satisfying sex.

She had still been too angry with him and irritated about being seduced into doing anything so crazy as to have sex in the middle of the day in the office when the chances of being caught had been huge, to consider before what it might mean. Apology? Or just the chance to get what he had missed before?

She had taken it that way.

He had looked ... distressed when she had left, though.

He had told her he would do better—Maybe he *had* thought he was making it up to her for the way he had behaved the first time?

She'd been furious with him for not coming before, and then just as pissed off when he had. She supposed that might have been a little confusing.

Not that she'd had any complaints insofar as the sex went. She had never had such mind blowing sex before in her life!

She was still trying to decide whether the latest encounter with Adam meant that he wanted to pursue an actual relationship or not when she got home and found him standing at her door.

## Chapter Six

"You left work an hour ago. I thought you would be here," Adam said, struggling to keep the accusation out of his voice.

"I stopped at the market to pick up a few things," Evelyn responded, indicating the bag she was holding. "I wasn't expecting you...was I?"

He took the bag from her, staring at her expectantly.

"Would you like to come in?"

"Yes, thank you," he responded politely.

Keying in the security code, she preceded him, leading the way up two flights of stairs to her apartment. He scanned the hallway and stairs as he followed her.

She saw that he was frowning when she turned from locking the door behind them, but he didn't say anything when she sent him a questioning look. Taking the bag from him, she went into the kitchen to put the groceries up. He followed, surveying the kitchen with much the same expression that he had worn when he looked the building over, which was to say *no* expression at all.

"You live here," he commented finally.

Evelyn had the distinct impression he disapproved. Wryly, she admitted there wasn't much to approve of. She kept it neat and clean, but nothing was going to make the place attractive. "It's not much, I know, but I'm hardly ever here. It's comfortable enough, and it's cheap."

He nodded, shifted uncomfortably, and finally exhaled a rough breath. "I wanted to apologize."

Evelyn paused and then finished putting up her groceries. "For what?"

He stared at her uncomfortably. "Whatever I did that made you angry with me," he responded finally.

Folding her arms over her chest as she turned to face him, Evelyn leaned back against the counter and studied him thoughtfully. "But you don't know what it was?" she guessed.

He frowned. Uneasiness flickered in his eyes. "I'm not certain," he said cautiously.

She dropped her arms to her sides and pushed away from the counter. "If you don't feel like you did anything wrong..."

"I *do* feel that I did," he interrupted her. "I know I did. You wouldn't be angry if I hadn't."

She studied his face. If he wasn't upset about it, he was doing a damned convincing job of pretending he was. Moving toward him, she lifted her hands and toyed with the buttons of his uniform shirt. "How do you know?"

He looked disconcerted, then thoughtful, as if he was turning it over in his mind. "I've never seen you angry."

Her heart executed a funny little jig. "But you hardly ever see me."

She heard him swallow as she settled her palms against his hard chest.

"I see you every day."

She didn't try to hide her surprise. "How could you see me every day when I don't see you?" she asked curiously.

"I'm head of security. I view the security records."

She didn't know how she felt about that. She knew they had tight security at Robotics Inc. There were always industrial spies about, out to steal promising developments. She supposed it was necessary, but she still didn't like the thought that she was being 'watched'. "And you watch me?"

He frowned, apparently having picked up on her dislike of being spied on. "My fa...Mr. Johnson requires it."

Fa? She wondered what he had started to say but decided to dismiss it since she doubted she could pry it out of him. "He requires you to watch me?" she asked, trying to decide whether that was a good thing or a bad thing. It was certainly bad if he had her watched because he doubted her loyalty to the company, but if he had just instigated surveillance to make certain she was because he was thinking about promoting her...

Dark color started at his neck and worked its way upward. "He requires that I watch everyone."

But he watched her? She didn't know how she felt about that either. Flattered, she supposed, in a way. If it had been anyone but Adam she might have been uneasy, but she didn't believe he had nefarious reasons for watching her. It occurred to her, in point of fact, that he might have been watching over her because of the attack weeks earlier and that thought warmed her.

Still, there was something about the way he'd said it that seemed, to her hopeful heart, to mean more than just that he watched out for her. "But you watch me?" she asked tentatively.

He lifted a hand to trace his fingers lightly along her cheek. "When I can."

"And you want to apologize so I won't be angry anymore?"

He nodded his head slowly, a faint smile curling one corner of his mouth.

"Because?" she prompted.

A faint frown appeared between his brows.

Evelyn fought the urge to roll her eyes. It was like pulling teeth to get anything out of him. "Because you like me?"

The frown disappeared, and the smile returned. "Yes."

"It isn't just about sex?"

Wariness flickered in his eyes. "I like that part, too," he finally said, his voice tentative.

Evelyn chuckled. "Good, because I like that part, too." Pulling away from him, she caught his hand and led him through the apartment to her bedroom. He looked surprised, but he followed her willingly. He looked at her askance when they reached her bedroom.

She smiled at him shyly. "I thought, maybe, you'd like to give me a proper apology."

Confusion flickered in his eyes, but he watched with rapt interest as she removed her clothing. He didn't approach her or remove his own, and she began to feel uncomfortable by the time she had stripped to her bra and panties. Inwardly, she shrugged. In for a penny, in for a pound, she thought, removing the bra and panties and then moving to the bed.

He followed, stopping beside the bed to study her for a long a moment, and then began to remove his own clothing, his expression taut. His hands shook slightly as he worked the

openings, shrugging out of first his uniform shirt and then the trousers. She wasn't certain if it was nervousness or eagerness, but she warmed with budding anticipation and appreciation as she watched him, discovering without much surprise that his body was as glorious as she had imagined it would be—more perfect even than she had imagined. When he sat down on the edge of her bed to remove his boots and pull his pants the rest of the way off, she got up on her knees and moved behind him, stroking her hands lightly over his back.

He stilled, almost seemed to hold his breath.

Emboldened, she followed the path of one hand with her lips, testing the smooth skin of his shoulders and back, the hardness of the muscles beneath the silken sheathe of flesh.

A shudder went through him. He released a heavy, ragged breath.

She moved away from him after a few moments, running her hand over his shoulder and down one arm to grasp his hand as she sat down and then leaned back against the pillows. He followed the tug of her hand, twisting and settling above her, supporting the bulk of his weight on his side.

For a long moment, they merely gazed at one another. Finally, Evelyn curled a hand around the back of his neck and tugged him down, brushing her lips lightly along his. He sucked in a harsh breath and held it as she explored his face with her lips, slowly, teasingly.

He released his pent up breath on a gusty sigh. "This feels good, Evie."

"Does it?" His reaction sent a dizzying current of heat through her, gave rise to the urge to explore him thoroughly with her hands and mouth, and more, to see if she could tear his control from his grasp. Breathless with anticipation and her own daring, she pulled away from him. "Turn over."

He looked surprised, but he rolled onto his back. She sat up and climbed on top of him. Straddling his hips, she nestled his erection in her cleft and rocked back and forth a few times, thrilled at the feel of his thick member rubbing along her sensitive nether lips. His face twisted, as if with pain. His eyes slid closed. Leaning down, she braced her weight on her arms on either side of his head and leaned lower to caress his face with her lips again, this time moving to one ear. "Tonight you're mine," she whispered, then traced the swirls of his ear with her tongue, sucked his ear lobe, and nibbled love bites down the strong column of his neck, up his throat, then over his cleft chin before she returned to his mouth.

His lips parted as she traced the finely etched contours with her tongue. Abruptly, he lifted his hands and speared his fingers into her hair, curling them against her skull before she could retreat to tease him further. The heat of his mouth as it opened over hers sent a wave of heady pleasure through her. At the rough caress of his tongue along hers, desire poured through her veins and nerve endings, bringing her body to full alert. The cling of his mouth and stroke of his tongue felt so good as he explored her mouth. His heat and taste and scent, inundating her senses with his essence was like a powerful, innervating drug. She wavered for several moments between her desires—the one to simply enjoy what he did to her with his kiss, the other to pursue her original goal. She compromised by enjoying it until he broke from her lips to drag in a ragged breath of air and ducked away from his grasp before he could claim her lips again, moving down his throat as she had before. This time, however, she continued downward, enjoying the

feel of his smooth skin against her palms, surveying the hard mounds of muscles and dips that cleanly delineated one from another with fingertips and palms before she leaned closer to nip at his flesh with the edge of her teeth, suck little bites, stroke the small patches with her tongue.

He moved restlessly beneath her, tensed as if gathering himself to tip her off. "Let me," she murmured. "I want to do this."

Some of the tension went out of him as he subsided, acquiescing silently to her exploration, but she felt the muscle groups along his body tense and bunch with each light caress.

When she was satisfied with her exploration of his chest, she moved lower, tracing a path along the center of his body over the rippling muscles of his belly until she reached his lower belly. He uttered little breathless grunts as she teased his sensitive lower belly, as if each kiss punched the breath from him. Smiling inwardly, she ignored his jutting, throbbing cock, which twitched and moved as she carefully circled it as if begging for attention.

His hips began to lift slightly as she nibbled at his lower belly. His hand settled heavily on the back of her head, his fingers curling against her scalp.

"Evie," he murmured raggedly, a single plea to end his torment.

Heated excitement surged through her. She transferred her attention from his belly to his cock, nipping a path along the length of it from the root to the tip with her lips. She paused briefly when she reached the head. Breathing out a gusty sigh, she extended her tongue to trace the ridge that delineated the head from the shaft. He jerked, his fingers tightening in her hair. He caught at her shoulder with his other hand, holding her tightly and at the same time pushing, as if he couldn't make up his mind which he wanted most. She took the head of his cock in her mouth, sucking on the smooth, rounded knob of flesh experimentally. He tasted wonderful, filled her mouth in a way that made her heart thunder in her chest with excitement. The sound he made when she sucked on him, the almost painful tightening of his fingers against her shoulder and skull raised a flock of goosebumps. She caught his shaft firmly in one hand before he could thrust her away and began to stroke him with her mouth and hand in calculated movements that had him jerking and twisting feverishly beneath her in moments, curling his hips to surge into her mouth one moment, struggling to evade the tease of her tongue the next.

Moisture gathered in her sex as she caressed him with her mouth and tongue and hand. Heated need filled her, making her body tense, her womb contract, drugging her mind with rising desire.

"Evie," he growled abruptly. "You're going to make me come."

Her heart stuttered at the warning, commenced to hammering harder as the want flooded her to make him come, to feel his cock jerking in her mouth, to taste the essence of his passion. Her throat closed with the thirst for it even while she wondered where the desire had come from. She'd never done such a thing, never wanted to. Now, she wanted it more than she'd ever wanted anything. She heard him grinding his teeth as she renewed her efforts, trying to tear his control from his grasp.

He grasped her shoulders almost bruisingly, pulling her loose and tossing her onto her back on the bed beside him. Before she could even catch her breath or utter a protest, he swarmed over her, caught her lips beneath his in a searing kiss of such ravening hunger it set her on fire, sucked the air from her lungs. She gasped in a desperate breath of air as



he broke the kiss and moved to one breast, snatching her breath away again as he caught first one painfully swollen tip in his mouth and then the other, tugging and sucking at it with his mouth in a way that made her feel faint. She plowed her fingers through his silky hair, clutching at him frantically, trying to anchor herself in the world as it tilted and spun dizzily.

He worked his way down her belly as if he meant to eat her alive, nibbling and sucking at her flesh until his stimulus of her nerve endings threw her entire being in an uproar, jolts of intense pleasure firing into her brain from so many directions at once that she could barely grasp one before another sizzled through her.

“No!” she gasped frantically as he reached her belly, grasped her thighs and jerked them apart, diving for the core of her existence at that moment in time. The second his hot mouth opened over her sex, a wave of such intensity rocked her that it knocked the breath from her. She tangled her fingers in his hair mindlessly, tugging at him as he stroked his tongue along her cleft, found her clit, and sucked it into his mouth. He ignored her unspoken demand, tugging at the tiny bundle of nerves as he had her nipples moments before. She managed to suck in a handful of panting breaths before her climax hit her with the force of an exploding bomb, the force of it shattering.

She was still twitching and jerking with the convulsions of bliss rocking her when he lifted his head and launched himself over her, catching the bulk of his weight on the elbows he planted on either side of her. His mouth covered hers in a brief, hungry assault, his gusty breath filling her desperately laboring lungs with the air she couldn’t seem to gather herself. He punched it from her as quickly when he thrust his cock into the mouth of her sex, using her body’s moisture to breach the tightly clenched muscles of her channel and sink deeply inside of her.

“Adam,” she groaned, relishing his conquest despite her body’s protest at the invasion. Sparks ignited in the ashes of her spent passion, caught fire again as he thrust and retreated in a rough, desperate plunder of her body. Lifting her shaking legs, she wrapped them around his waist to counter his frantic, pounding thrusts. The movement opened her more fully to him, allowed him to drive deeper. He quickened his pace, driving into her so hard and fast she had to cling tightly to him to halt her skidding progress up the bed.

He froze abruptly, his breath sawing in and out of his lungs so hard it left his chest in a ragged, pained sound. A shudder rippled along his length. He groaned, ground his teeth together, uttered a choked sound, and began pumping into her rapidly, his body jerking with the force of the expulsion of his seed. A thrill went through her at the sounds, his movements. Her flesh pebbled all over her body. She uttered a sharp cry as another climax ripped through her.

The culmination sapped the strength from every muscle in her body, dragged her so close to unconsciousness that darkness pervaded her mind. He went limp, sagging heavily against her. She lost even the will to cling to him and allowed her leaden arms and legs to drop to the mattress. It was all she could do to drag panting breaths into her lungs. A profound sense of happiness and satisfaction wafted through her, though, warmed her in a surprising way as her senses gathered the comforting feel of his weight on top of her. It took a strenuous effort to lift her arms and curl them around him, to hold him to her and stroke his back, but the joy of utter completeness filled her as she did. He shifted his arms to bear more of his weight after a moment, easing the pressure against her chest, but

he made no attempt to evade her caresses. She didn't know if he was enjoying it, or simply too weak to move at the moment, but she was perfectly content to take advantage either way.

"Am I hurting you?" he asked after a few moments, his voice a drunken slur.

"Uhuh," she murmured, shifting her fingers through his silky hair. "I like this."

He dragged in a deep, shaky breath. "I wish I could stay here forever," he murmured.

Her throat closed with emotions she didn't dare examine. "I wish you could, too."

He lifted his head to study her face for a long, heart stopping moment. She couldn't quite decipher the emotions that crossed his features. After a moment, though, he gathered himself and moved off of her. A chill caressed her skin as she lost his heat, but when he'd settled beside her, he gathered her into his arms and pulled her to him until she was draped over his chest. He returned the favor then, stroking her back as she had his, smoothing her tousled hair with one hand. She could tell from the tension in him, though, that his thoughts were troubled. She heard him swallow.

"I'll have to go...soon, I think."

Disappointment flooded her. "You can't stay the night?"

"I can stay a while."

There was hesitancy in his voice that told her she'd misunderstood his first comment.

Dread began to thread its way through her contentment.

"They will send me away," he said when a few minutes had passed. There was a questioning lilt to the statement, as if he wanted to say more but wasn't certain how to say it. Her focus zeroed in on what he *had* said, though.

"Who?"

His response was slow in coming, as if he'd considered it carefully before answering.

"The company."

She lifted her head to stare at him. "You're being transferred?"

There was something in his eyes that told her that wasn't entirely the case, but he merely shrugged. "Yes."

She swallowed against the emotion that welled in her throat. "You have to go?"

His face tightened. "Yes."

She settled her head on his shoulder again, fighting the disappointment that threatened to completely demolish the enjoyment she'd been feeling. Lifting a hand, she smoothed her palm over his chest, trying not to think about the hollow feeling in the pit of her stomach at the thought that he was leaving and she wouldn't get to see him any more. "You could...be with me until you have to go," she said tentatively.

The tension she hadn't even sensed in him disappeared. He swallowed audibly. "You would...let me?"

She lifted her head enough to press a kiss to one hard pec. "I'd...like that...a lot."

His arms tightened around her. He rolled onto his side, gathering her against his length and burrowing his face against her neck. "I wish...." He paused. "I wish I didn't have to leave you, Evie."

Warmth expanded in her chest, tightened uncomfortably. She found she didn't want to explore the feeling, dreaded having to acknowledge it. "Why do you call me Evie?" she asked, less from curiosity than to distract herself from the thoughts beating at the back of her consciousness.

"It's from ancient religious text. The first man was Adam and the woman created for him

was Eve.”

Evelyn thought for several moments that she would cry. No one had ever said anything to her that was even half as sweet. Tears stung her nose and eyes.

“You weren’t created for me, though,” he said gruffly, some emotion threading his voice that sounded like anger. “And I wasn’t created for you ... even though I wish I had been. My creators had something different in mind for me, and I can’t change that.”

## Chapter Seven

Evelyn hadn't asked Adam what he'd meant when he'd said 'his creators'. She hadn't actually registered what he'd said until much later, and she hadn't wanted to know badly enough to bring up the subject again. It seemed to her that he'd all but confessed outright that he loved her. She didn't know why he had no choice but to go when he was told to go, but she'd sensed his anger and frustration that he had no choice, and she saw no sense in broaching that subject either when it didn't seem they'd have much time together.

Wasn't it better, she thought, to enjoy being together while they could?

He'd seemed perfectly content to lay cuddling with her for hours. She'd gotten up after a while, prompted by her grumbling stomach, even though she would've rather ignored it, and fixed them both something to eat.

Unable to come up with a 'safe' subject when she discovered he was as reluctant to talk about his past as he was his future, she'd done most of the talking. It didn't seem to bore him. In fact, he'd chuckled at one of the tales she'd dredged up from her childhood, and she'd struggled to resurrect more memories to entertain him.

They'd showered together and then raced back to her bedroom and leapt onto her bed, which had promptly collapsed under their combined assault, laughed like idiots over the broken bed, and then made love until she'd finally passed out from sheer exhaustion. Surfacing toward consciousness near dawn, she'd reached for him and discovered he was gone. Disappointment hit her first, and then a flicker of anger that extinguished almost as quickly as it had formed.

He hadn't made her any promises. It was her own damned fault if she'd expected more, she told herself as she lay staring up at the ceiling of her bedroom.

She didn't know anything about Adam Mercury, she realized.

Nothing.

Except the way he made her feel whenever he looked at her, smiled her, touched her.

Why wouldn't he talk about his past, she wondered?

She supposed, considering his position with the company, she could understand why he wouldn't talk about his reassignment. Undoubtedly, it was a top security matter. But why couldn't he tell her anything about his past? Surely all of it couldn't be a deep, dark secret! Maybe his training and the jobs he'd done before, but before that?

It was like he'd just dropped from the sky—no yesterdays, no tomorrows, only today.

It frustrated her. She wanted to know more about him—everything about him, even the bad things.

Maybe that was it? Maybe his past was just too painful for him to want to talk about it?

Or maybe he'd been in trouble before and he was afraid she would think badly of him?

It couldn't be that, she decided. She couldn't believe he would've passed the background check if he'd been in any kind of trouble in his past.

Besides, he just didn't have the look of a trouble maker.

He didn't actually look old enough to have had a 'long' history of trouble in any case. She hadn't really thought much about his age. It *had* occurred to her that he might

be younger than her, but she couldn't believe it was enough to make a real difference. He wouldn't have gotten the job as head of security if he was actually as young as he looked.

Realizing after a time that she'd lain thinking about him longer than she should have, she got up to get ready for work.

She was still mildly annoyed when she arrived at Robotics Inc. that Adam had slipped out while she was sleeping, mostly because it made her worry that she couldn't trust what he'd said to her the night before. It gave rise to the uneasy feeling that he might have sneaked out to keep from having to face her in the morning, or because he was worried about being seen leaving her place.

Neither one of those possibilities would seem to support her belief that he felt something for her beyond desire.

Not that she would quibble over *that*!

Truthfully, she hadn't expected that much. She'd hoped he had enough interest in her to give her a mind blowing 'birthday' present, but she hadn't thought beyond that, hadn't considered the possibility that he might be interested in more than a one nighter. It wasn't that she hadn't fantasized about more. She had. She just hadn't thought he was interested in her.

She found it difficult to focus once she'd settled at her desk and set to work. Her mind kept wandering off to try to untangle the mystery surrounding Adam, revisiting their night together, worrying the question of whether he actually did care about her. And, when she wasn't thinking about any of those things, she was wondering where he was, if he'd make up some excuse to see her sometime during the day, or be waiting for her when she got home as he had the night before.

Mr. Johnson interrupted her emotional roller coaster mid morning, calling her into his office to take a memo for the defense department. Evelyn's heart instantly commenced to thump with excitement, her thoughts diverted completely to her job for the first time since she'd arrived. The company had been working on a huge account with the government, she knew—everyone knew, although it had been so hush-hush they knew almost nothing else about it. If this was *the* project the company had been working so hard to keep under wraps, then the request for her presence was more than a typical secretarial duty. It meant Mr. Johnson was acknowledging her as a non-security risk, maybe even considering giving her that position she'd been working so long and hard for!

Her hands were shaking as she retrieved her pad from her desk drawer. Her knees felt weak as she straightened and headed for his door. Hearing voices inside, she paused at the door, realizing Mr. Johnson had key players in the company in attendance already—and that the meeting was obviously top secret since they'd undoubtedly been admitted through his private entrance.

Her heart commenced to knocking frantically against her chest wall. This was it, she thought, trying to tamp her jittery excitement. Lifting a hand, she tapped at the door for admittance.

The click of the door reinforced her certainty that her presence had been requested at a meeting of the utmost importance. She checked her hair, smoothed her damp palms over her skirt, straightened her spine, and marched in, trying to present an air of confidence she was far from feeling.

As she stepped into the room, she scanned it to see who was present at the meeting and

felt as if the floor had dropped out from under her.

Two security guards stood at attention on the far side of the room, their faces rigid—and identical. In fact everything about them was identical.

And both of them looked like Adam.

## Chapter Eight

Someone slipped a hand beneath Evelyn's elbow and guided her to a seat. She glanced blindly at the man, noted absently that it was Mr. Johnson himself, but she was in too much shock to really register it.

"It is a bit of a jolt, isn't it?" he murmured, his eyes alight with both excitement and glee.

If she hadn't been in a state of profound shock, she would've slapped his smirking face hard enough to rattle his eyeballs.

She felt the urge move through her.

Fortunately, as soon as her legs collapsed beneath her, dumping her in the seat he'd guided her to, he moved away. She turned her head to stare at Adam—and Adam, again. His—their gazes—flickered briefly in her direction before he—they—looked away again.

"Can I offer you a drink?"

The question brought her head around with a jerk. She stared at her boss uncomprehendingly. He smiled faintly. "We're celebrating the conclusion of our tests on the Autonomous Dynamic Android Mercenary—Or Adam Mercury as the dual units were introduced to the company at large."

"Dual units?" Evelyn managed to whisper as a tumbler of golden liquor was shoved into her hand.

He didn't answer. Maybe he didn't even hear the question. He moved away, settled at his desk.

Evelyn stared at the liquid sloshing around in the glass she was holding in her shaking hand and finally took a quick gulp. It burned all the way down, took her breath, brought tears to her eyes. She blinked them back with an effort, set the glass down on the nearest table before she could do anything so incredibly stupid as to drain it. Her mind was spinning already. She didn't need to add to the problem.

She sat stiffly erect on the edge of her seat, her memo pad gripped so tightly in her hands it was a wonder she hadn't crushed the delicate piece of electronics.

Electronics, her mind echoed.

She'd spent the night fucking an android—spent months yearning for some acknowledgment from him—it—they--that she was alive, a woman, desirable.

She was in love with an Android! She didn't even know which one, and hysteria clawed briefly at the base of her throat, threatened to erupt into tears, or screams, or cursing.

"If you're ready, Ms. Carlson?"

Evelyn gaped at him blankly for several moments before she abruptly recalled she'd been summoned to take a letter. Nodding jerkily, she took out the stylus and flipped the unit on. Her mind tried to wander as he gave her the salutation, address, the department head the letter was intended for. Frowning in an effort to concentrate, she gripped the stylus more tightly and stared at the electronic ink as it scrolled across her

screen.

It was an invitation to the head of the defense department to visit the desert facility and view a demonstration of the infiltration unit developed by Robotics Inc. Designed to work in tandem, the A.D.A.M. Mercury units were identical in every detail, making them ideal for infiltration—sabotage—assassination, since one would work as a diversion while the other completed the task, making the unit not only extremely efficient, but undetectable in situations of a highly sensitive nature and easily extracted without the risk of losing the units.

He went on to detail their construction from their superior alloy chassis to the biological materials grafted to the chassis by a special process developed by Robotics Inc.—everything about the units was one hundred percent authentic—hair, eyes, teeth, and internal organs, and would pass even the most sophisticated electronic surveillance. The brain was optimized by a core CPU deeply imbedded in actual living brain tissue and, due to state of the art programming, the units were capable of emulating human behavior and moving undetected among the human populace. Every effort had been made to insure that they were completely undetectable by electronic surveillance devices. They had been field tested and were ready for action when called upon. Programmed to attack and kill silently and efficiently whenever necessary, they were also capable of using a wide range of weapons so, although they had been specifically designed for espionage, they could just as easily be adapted into a typical military unit.

Evelyn stared at the blinking cursor when he stopped speaking, trying not to think at all.

“Send it through the secure channels, Ms. Carlson.”

Evelyn lifted her head to look at him, nodded jerkily, and, realizing it was a dismissal, got to her feet, hoping she could make it out the door without collapsing.

“I don’t have to tell you this is top secret—one that must remain top secret for the units to be effective.”

“No sir,” Evelyn responded, wondering how her voice could sound so normal.

She was relieved when she managed to make it back to her desk and collapse into her chair without crumbling to the floor, but once she had, she simply stared at the memo unit, reading and re-reading the letter she’d taken.

It dawned on her after a little while that Mr. Johnson had told her to send it through secure channels, and that that meant she had to take the letter to the security office. She bounded out of her chair abruptly. He hadn’t come out. They hadn’t come out. Hoping the meeting was still in progress and the androids with them, she rushed to the elevator and down to the floor where the security office was located.

She braked to a halt when she discovered the android had beat her to the office.

He studied her warily when she skidded to a stop and gaped at him.

Evelyn cleared her throat. “I have something that has to go out through the secure channel.”

He extended his hand.

She placed the memo unit in his hand, staring at it, trying not to think about the way it had felt the night before when he had held her, stroking her skin as if he actually felt something.

“We need to talk.”

Her head bobbed up at the comment as if someone had jerked it up with strings.



“No. That’s...no, I can’t. It’s alright. We don’t need to.”

He moved closer.

She scurried toward the door, and he stopped. She saw his throat work.

How could he seem so real, she thought wildly?

“Evie.”

She felt her chin wobble, felt, with a sense of panic, tears well in her eyes. It took all she could do to swallow against the knot of emotion that welled in her throat. “Don’t call me that!” she snapped. “Don’t.... Just send it, please, so I can go? I can’t do this. Really I can’t. I have to be here for hours and...and I don’t know how I’m going to get through this, but please don’t talk to me.”

He studied her for a long moment and finally looked away. Turning, he led the way into the EMR (electro magnet radiation) cage. She didn’t look at him. She couldn’t bring herself to for fear she’d fall apart. If she could just make it through the rest of the day, she thought, she could fall apart when she got home and then pick herself again to face another day, and the day after that, and, maybe, one day she’d know what it felt like to be normal again.

A bank of vid displays caught her attention as she followed Adam. She’d never been allowed inside the security offices before, had had no idea even when Adam had told her he’d watched her every day that he’d been talking about something like this! The view changed almost second by second from office to office and elevator to corridor, and she wondered how the man staring up at the screens could possibly catch anything, wondered if he was yet another android—wondered a little wildly if all of the employees of Robotics Inc. were.

How would she know? She’d been intimate with Adam. He’d been *inside* of her, had kissed her, had held her like a lover, and she hadn’t known, hadn’t even had an inkling.

Because he’d been designed to infiltrate and programmed to emulate human behavior to make that possible.

The bastards were good. She’d give them that.

She’d been completely convinced every time Adam had looked at her with his soulful eyes that he really cared something about her.

He couldn’t *care*!

He wasn’t real!

And she couldn’t think about that right now or she was going to be a basket case.

She tried not to watch him as he inserted the tablet in the system and downloaded the data, then keyed in the code to destroy the information recorded on her drive, but she couldn’t help it. She watched his face, looking for any telltale sign of what he really was, watched his hands as he moved them over the keyboard of the console. She looked away when he handed her tablet back to her.

Relieved when she was outside of the security offices again, she headed back to her own office, ignoring the temptation to take a detour to the ladies room where she might have some hope of privacy. She couldn’t take the chance that she wouldn’t be able to pull herself together again.

It didn’t get any easier as the day wore on. She was so exhausted from trying to hold her emotions at bay she had no idea what she’d done with her day, what she’d screwed up in her distraction, but she’d never been more glad in her life when the time

came that she could set her desk in order, retrieve her purse, and leave. She wanted to run. Instead, she walked as sedately as she had every day of her life before, collected her transport in the parking garage, and, for once, simply told the computer to take her home.

Ordinarily, she would've been terrified at the thought of leaving her safety in the 'hands' of a machine. Usually, she guided the transport herself.

Today, she just didn't care. She hardly noticed the traffic at all. She simply sat in her seat and stared blankly out of the windows until the transport finally stopped and the door opened. She'd already climbed out before she remembered to tell the computer to dock the transport. Clutching her purse, she headed up the walk to the door, entered the building, and climbed the stairs as she usually did.

She flopped on her couch when she reached the living room, staring at nothing in particular, waiting for the tears she'd held at bay all day, willing them. They didn't come, and the numbness didn't leave her. Instead, she stared dry eyed at the window that slowly darkened with the waning day.

The buzzer nearly made her jump out of her skin. She bolted to her feet and looked around blankly, unable to figure out, at first, what the noise was. She flinched when it sounded again, but that time realized it was her security buzzer.

No one ever came to see her.

She had no friends, no family to speak of—only her father, and he had a life of his own.

She moved to the panel anyway when it sounded again, certain it must be someone who'd rang her apartment by mistake.

"Evie?"

The numbness crashed the moment she heard his voice. "Go away, Adam!"

"Let me explain."

"I don't need a damned explanation! Go the hell away!" she snarled. Removing her finger from the com unit, she stalked across the room to stand in front of the window, watching to see him leave. Instead, she heard a distant crash and then footsteps on the stairs—running footsteps. A moment later, someone banged on her door so hard she wondered why it didn't cave in.

"Damn it, Evie! Talk to me!"

Evelyn felt her heart skip a half a dozen beats at the anger in his voice. "Go away, Adam! I mean it! I'll call security if you don't!"

He twisted the knob—off. Evelyn stared blankly at the door as her knob hit the floor and the door flew inward.

And then *both* Adams, both wearing angry expressions, stalked into her apartment, slamming the door behind them.

## Chapter Nine

Evelyn gaped at the two men, recalling abruptly that Mr. Johnson had said they worked in tandem. One nodded at the other, who promptly returned to the door and propped his shoulders against it, folding his arms over his chest.

"You said you didn't want to talk to me at the office," Adam said tightly.

"I don't want to talk to you at all!" Evelyn said shakily. "We don't *need* to talk!"

Frustration flickered across his features. "It was to protect you, Evie," he said finally, his voice strained. "I didn't tell you, couldn't, because it would've been a security leak."

She hadn't wanted to make eye contact with him, but she did when he spoke, drawn to look at him. "Was it? All that—everything that happened was just part of the field test, and I couldn't know, right?"

He looked shocked.

Damn him! He was so fucking good she wished she had something to beat his head in.

"No! Evie! Don't think that. I just wanted to be with you."

"You're a fucking android, damn you! What the hell do you know about *wanting*? I wanted! I fell for this...this charade the company worked out to field test you! I fell..." She broke off, embarrassed by what she'd almost admitted, that she'd fallen in love with an android. "I'm insane! I'm arguing with a damned android! I don't want to talk about this, at all, and I sure as hell don't want to talk to you! I wish to god I'd never set eyes on you!"

Hurt flickered across his features and then anger. He crossed the room in swift strides, catching her before it even occurred to her to try to run. "Don't say that, Evie! I *do* know about want, damn it! I feel it. I feel everything. Why is it different now? It didn't matter last night when I made love to you, held you. You said you wanted to be with me, that you would until they sent me away!"

"I didn't know you weren't real last night!" she snapped and then laughed a little wildly. "I don't even know if it was you last night! Was it? Or was it him?"

His fingers tightened on her arms. "I *am* real!" he ground out angrily. "We're both *real*! We aren't *emulating* human behavior, damn it! We feel."

Startled by the thought that flashed in her mind, Evelyn examined his face and then looked at the other Adam near the door. "I fucked both of you, didn't I?"

Anger flashed in his eyes and then hurt. His gaze flickered over her face, and then he turned and looked at his counterpart.

He moved away from the door, approaching the two of them. She gaped at them as the two exchanged a long look, almost as if they could communicate with one another. She wondered a little wildly if they could and then realized the thought wasn't nearly as crazy as it had seemed. In fact, it was almost a certainty that they had been *designed* to do just that.

It was the second one that spoke, Adam II—or maybe he was Adam I? "I made

love to you, Evie. Don't tell me you don't know the difference."

Evelyn gaped at him, trying to wrap her mind around what he'd said as well as what he'd implied—that she really had been with both of them.

They shifted around her, sandwiching her between them. Adam I lifted his hand and caressed her cheek. "I told you I loved you last night. I *do* love you, Evie. Don't say I don't know how, that I can't feel." He released a ragged breath. "I didn't tell you because I couldn't breach security, but also because I couldn't bear for you to look at me the way they do. Nothing that happened between us had anything to do with their damned field tests. I couldn't let you go believing what they'd told you—that none of it was real because I wasn't real."

Adam II moved closer behind her until she could feel the heat of his body. Slipping his hands around her waist, he pulled her against his length, and she could feel his erection digging into the cleft of her buttocks. Surprise flickered through her, but warmth, as well. Even as she began to turn her head to look back at him, Adam I settled his hand more firmly against her cheek, tilting his head to brush his lips along hers. She sucked a quick breath, wavering, her attention caught by the tingling the light touch produced. Apparently emboldened when she didn't attempt to evade him, he shifted closer, opened his mouth over hers for a deeper kiss. His mouth clung to hers, but lightly, his touch almost tentative as he traced her lips with his tongue and delved inside to coast his tongue along hers.

If he'd rushed her, he might have tipped the scales on the side of reason. She would never know. The very unthreatening quality of his kiss enthralled her even as his taste and scent invaded her senses in a surreptitious assault she was scarcely aware of until she felt the heat rise inside of her in response. Coaxed, she curled her tongue along his to experience his essence more fully and from that moment she was lost. He drew her tongue into his mouth and sucked it lightly, sending a thrill through her that flushed her skin with heated sensitivity.

He exhaled a gusty sigh, almost of surrender, into her mouth and she took it deeply inside of her where it curled into her liked heated tentacles, squeezing her heart and lungs so that they began to labor, tightening around her womb and drawing heated moisture into her channel. She lifted to him, opened to him like the petals of a blossom opening to draw the rays of the sun.

He sensed it, or felt it in the sudden tension in her as she lifted her hands to his chest and grasped his uniform shirt, curling her hands into tight fists to hold herself closer to him, to feel *more*. The glide of a hand from her waist to the closure of her blouse and the tug there distracted her briefly, but the entire tone of Adam's kiss had changed when she'd moved closer in her eagerness. His kiss changed from tentative supplicant to burgeoning hunger to conqueror in the space of seconds. And as he turned up the heat and his hunger filtered into her mind, her body instantly responded with an equal, escalating need.

A breath of coolness wafted over her flesh as Adam II, having parted the closure from waist to neck, peeled her blouse from her shoulders. She shivered as his mouth settled on her bare shoulder and traced a path along the ridge to the back of her neck, feeling her nipples pucker tightly in response against the hands he'd lifted to cup and massage her breasts. He rubbed his palms over the tight centers then slipped his hands inside the cups to scoop her bared breasts into his hands, plucking at the tight little buds.

At the pull of his fingers, lightning arced from her nipples to her womb, making it contract almost painfully. She made a sound of need against Adam's mouth, too drunk with the liquid desire pouring through her to assimilate, at first, that the mouth covering hers belonged to one Adam and the hands to the other. It was the nudge of his cock against her buttocks as he arched into her and the nip of his teeth along the excruciatingly sensitive skin along the back of her neck that finally penetrated the haze.

Doubt flickered into her mind. The wry thought arose that if they thought for one moment the way to her heart was through her pussy they weren't far off the mark. She couldn't think of an objection when they made her feel like this, couldn't think at all and she didn't want to.

She dismissed the voice of reason, too caught up in the pleasure pelting her from so many directions at once to worry about the how, or why, or consequences, or regrets. It felt too good to object, felt too wonderful to yield to the doubts and objections fluttering against the far reaches of her mind.

She was aware of them, briefly, though.

She completely lost touch with reality when Adam abruptly lifted his lips from hers, sucked in a ragged breath, and bent down. Nudging one hand away, he captured the tender peak of one breast. Fire scoured a path all the way from her breast, down her center, and settled in a molten pool in her sex, making it flutter and contract desperately for his possession.

The hand dispossessed settled on her belly and skated downward. Grasping the hem of her skirt, he lifted it and slipped his hand between her thighs, cupping her mound and massaging her nether lips briefly through the thin fabric of her panties before he delved beneath it, parted the tender petals, and found her clit. She gasped, shuddered, dropped her head weakly against Adam II's shoulder as he teased her clit while Adam I gnawed and tugged at the nipple he held captive until she thought she would pass out.

He switched his torment to her other breast as Adam II ceased to tease her clit and traced her damp cleft back to the mouth of her sex, pushing a finger inside of her. Frustration filled her. She'd been so close to coming! They'd snatched it from her by the abrupt shift of stimulation.

She forgot her disappointment in the next moment, captivated by the thrust of Adam II's finger inside of her, the feel of his mouth along her shoulder and the side of her neck and Adam I's tug on her nipples.

She'd just settled in to enjoy it thoroughly when Adam II stepped away from her as Adam I abruptly grasped her buttocks and lifted her upward. She threw her arms and legs around him in automatic response to catch herself. He took advantage of the fact that she'd opened her body to him, hoisting her higher and aligning the head of his cock with the mouth of her sex. Her own weight and his upward thrusts combined to impale her on his shaft. She gasped, biting down lightly on his shoulder as she felt him sinking deeply inside of her. Pumping his hips, he thrust in and out of her and then, almost as abruptly as he'd entered her, withdrew altogether.

What was he *doing*, she thought dizzily? The thought had barely registered in her mind, though, when felt Adam II's belly pressing against her buttocks, felt his cock glide along her cleft, connect, delve inside of her. Eagerly, she curled her spine to allow him to drive deeply to assuage the itch that had begun to drive her crazy.

As Adam I had, though, he merely pumped in and out of her several times and

then withdrew.

Confusion filled her and anger sparked to life. Comprehension was quick in coming, though. Even as Adam I began to delve the mouth of her sex again, Adam II, having gathered her moisture, prodded her rectum, began to ease carefully into her. She caught her breath, too stunned at the realization that they both intended to penetrate at once to do more than wait anxiously for the pain that never came. Discomfort, yes, but no pain, and even the discomfort dissipated after a few moments, when they had fully penetrated her and held themselves still so that she could accustom herself to the incredible fullness.

They began to move after a few moments, in tandem, one penetrating deeply as the other withdrew, so that the shock of being penetrated was virtually constant, the stimulation unremitting, driving her within moments to culmination. She cried out as her climax hit her, shuddered as the waves of bliss wracked her, dissipated, and then immediately began to build again as they pounded in to her in desperate lunges in search of their own release.

Her second climax was harder than the first, tearing through her even as Adam II went rigid against her back, groaned, and began jerking and shuddering with his release. Adam I uttered a choked sound, shook, and drove deeply, bathing her womb in the hot seed jetting from his cock in a fountain.

Completely drained by the experience, Evelyn clung weakly to Adam I, trying to hold on. She thought, though, that if the two of them hadn't been holding her up she would've slid to the floor in a boneless puddle. They leaned together, the three of them, gasping for breath. After a few moments, Adam II, releasing a jerky hiss, withdrew from her.

Adam I tightened his arms around her. Weaving slightly, he turned and strode to her bedroom, climbed onto the mattress, and half fell, half sprawled with her. She released her tenuous grip on him when she felt the softness of the mattress at her back. Her arms and legs dropped lifelessly, heavily to the bed.

She was vaguely aware that the three of them were still fully clothed. The coolness of air brushed her nipples and the wetness along her cleft and thighs.

Adam II had followed them. Stripping his clothes off, he climbed into the bed beside her, drew her to him, and nuzzled his face against her neck. The bed shifted. In a few moments Adam I, also naked, climbed onto the bed behind her and shifted until he lay against her back.

She drifted, too content to be unduly disturbed by the discomfort of her twisted clothing. Apparently neither of them was equally indifferent. They pulled her clothes off despite her moaned complaint, soothing her by kissing and stroking the flesh they exposed as they tugged her this way and that to remove her clothes.

The thoughts she'd submerged in favor of the gratification they offered, fluttered in discontent at the back of her mind, but she willfully ignored them. Aside from being more deeply satisfied than she could ever recall, the attention they generously supplied in the aftermath added to her contentment. Sleepily, she nuzzled them back in appreciation. After a time, the soothing caresses became more pointed.

Exhausted from the emotional turmoil she'd endured throughout the day and the weariness only complete satisfaction can engender, she tried to ignore their attentions at first. They were persistent, though, determined to drag her from the edge of sleep and

she felt a slow building of the heat of passion until her pulse was throbbing through her again and the ache for satisfaction had returned. The brief qualms she'd had before didn't even rear their little heads as both men rolled to sandwich her on her side between them. She lifted one leg to drape it over Adam readily, eagerly positioned herself to accommodate them as one entered her from the front and the other from the back. The slickness from her passion and their previous coupling eased their possession. Her only complaint, and that a brief one, was that she couldn't move to seek the best position for her pleasure, but she discovered it wasn't necessary. They found the rhythm and the positions to give her the most pleasure, shifting and driving into her until she was gasping for breath, groaning, shuddering with the intense pleasure bombarding her, and then they took it to the peak and over the mountain top over and over until she lost count of the number of times they made her come, lost touch with the world, and finally lost consciousness when they at last allowed themselves to come with her and the three of them collapsed in a sweating, gasping tangle of bodies.

## Chapter Ten

It was a mixture of guilt and dread that dragged Adam upward from the depths of slumber to sudden, complete awareness. He lifted his head and stared at his brother as they shared the awareness, the thoughts that had prompted them.

He looked down at Evie, lifted a hand and lightly brushed the tangle of hair from her sleeping face, reluctance to leave warring with the certainty that he should, that he should have left long since.

*We'll be missed.*

His brother nodded. *We shouldn't have slept.*

Adam grimaced. *We shouldn't have done any of this. She'll be more angry... with both of us.*

Doubt and worry drew his brother's brows together over the bridge of his nose. *She responded to us, loved us. She wouldn't have done that if she'd still thought of us as androids, would she?*

Adam shrugged, remembering the way she'd looked at them. It made him feel sick even recalling it, and at the time it had been all he could do to retain the impassive front he knew was expected of him. He'd hoped never to see that look on her face. He'd thought that they might leave, and she would never know. It had been his consolation in knowing he had to go—the thought that she would remember him as a man who had loved her. He shook his head. *She was upset enough to discover we were androids. It was worse, I think, to discover there were two of us.*

*She won't understand that we share the same identity. Humans don't.*

Adam frowned. *We don't. We did in the beginning, but not now.*

His brother thought that over. *You're right*, he responded, obviously surprised at the realization. *I sense a change. She'll still confuse us, though.*

*It won't matter*, Adam responded grimly. *The demonstration is set for next week. They'll take us out of here before the end of the week to practice the course. We won't see her again.*

His brother's lips tightened, but he merely nodded and got off the bed, careful not to disturb Evie. They dressed in silence. *You take point*, Adam ordered. *I'll give you fifteen before I follow. Let me know if you see anyone loitering.*

His brother nodded. *You'll take the alternate route through the city?*

*Of course, but there's only one way into the building to avoid the bulk of the security cams. I don't want to be seen passing too closely behind you, and we sure as hell can't afford to meet up with the same people.*

Adam remembered that last thought before they parted with a sense of impending disaster when he almost literally ran down Bobbie, one of the new recruits in security, on his way into the building. The young man looked at him in surprise, but with complete recognition, and Adam felt his stomach execute a slow churn as the young man's eyes lit.

"I just about beat you to the clock," he said cheerfully. "That's a first!"

Adam smiled grimly, searching his mind for a convincing lie. "I was checking



the perimeter. I saw a man loitering near the rear door.”

The man looked unconvinced, and irritation flickered through him, but he thought it best not to belabor the point and brushed past him, striding quickly toward the rear entrance.

He should’ve known better than to try it, he thought, furious with himself. It was a dangerous mistake, and one he wouldn’t have made if he hadn’t had Evie on his mind—or more specifically, *leaving* Evie on his mind.

He’d begun to deeply regret yielding to the temptation to get closer to her. If he hadn’t, he didn’t think he would’ve felt any regret in leaving Robotics Inc. One ‘boss’ was the same as any other, and he hadn’t given a great deal of thought to the tasks that would be required of him. Even when he had, it hadn’t disturbed him. He hadn’t actually killed before. The simulations were deeply imbedded, though, and he doubted the actuality would differ by a great deal—or wouldn’t have if not for Evie. Now, when he thought of an existence of moving from one killing to another, never again knowing the balm of Evie’s gentleness, the pleasure of her touch, the urge to kill and the rage against it were both so strong he feared what he would become—not the cold blooded assassin they had programmed him to be, but a monster.

He didn’t want to be a thing that Evie would fear and hate, even if she never knew.

She *would* know, though. His father had told her what he had been created for.

She would know when he left what he’d gone to do.

She would never let him near again, even if he could somehow find a way back to her. His brother’s thoughts intruded as he reached the third level of the stairwell.

*Clear.*

*Screwed*, he responded grimly. *I ran into Bobby.*

*Christ! Bobby of the big mouth?*

*Yeah. The one with the tongue tied in the middle and loose on both ends. Monitor him. Maybe we can manage some damage control.*

“He ran into Phil Whitmore on the way in,” Adam announced grimly when he arrived in the security office.

Adam closed his eyes. “Fuck! Whitmore didn’t bite on the tale I spun for Bobby, I take it?”

His brother shrugged. “He didn’t say anything, but I didn’t like his expression.”

“An accident?” they contemplated in unison.

Adam considered it and discarded it with disgust. “Risky. It would look too suspicious if he was suddenly found dead.”

“It’s risky anyway,” his brother pointed out. “If he’s dead, he can’t talk.”

“Bobby can, though, and you can bet your ass he’d be telling everyone he’d just spoken to the man before the accident...and probably detailing the conversation they had. We can’t take out both of them. That would be way too telling.”

“So we just sit on it and hope for the best?”

“We sit on it and be prepared to act quickly,” Adam responded grimly.

\* \* \* \*

Evelyn was still exhausted when she got to work, despite two cups of coffee and a long, long shower. Wryly, she acknowledged that the upside of being worn to the bone was that she was too tired to be wired to explode with hysteria as she had been the day before.

Her troubles certainly hadn’t vanished, however, and neither had her distress. If

anything, she thought, she was more confused than before. Maybe she just *wanted* to be convinced that Adam—the two Adams—were more than just androids? She couldn't believe, though, that Mr. Johnson had *sent* them to convince her they were capable of feeling human emotions. What would be the point of that? She was almost certain he knew about the incident in the conference room the first time they'd been together—not absolutely certain, but pretty sure—but that still wouldn't explain the visit to her apartment the night before and their joint efforts to convince her they adored her.

She couldn't think of any reason at all why Mr. Johnson would've sent them, and that left, as far as she could see, the only explanation for their presence as freewill—a decision they'd made completely on their own, and probably against orders, because she couldn't imagine that the company would like to know their top secret project was wandering the city streets. Surely, regardless of the lengths the company had gone to to make them realistic, freedom of choice would have been the last thing they wanted to endow them with?

Mr. Johnson had said they'd been designed primarily for covert operations and specifically as assassins. The thought made her shiver, but she'd never seen anything at all cold about Adam—which meant he—they—were hiding more than their background, but she didn't want to examine that at the moment. There had to be a reason, though, that they'd considered the Adam project more appealing than training real men, and the only thing that presented itself to her was the possibility that androids would not be expected to have a conscience, feel fear, or any doubts, question authority—and that meant they were expected to perform without question.

She didn't think the developers had intended for Adam to have independence of that nature because it would've defeated the purpose. Autonomy to make quick decisions based on changing circumstances, yes, but not to decide whether or not to do what they'd been ordered to do.

Adam had told her he *felt*, that he wasn't just emulating emotions.

She believed him. She just didn't know if she could trust herself, because the discovery that he was an Android hadn't changed the way she felt about him. If it had, she wouldn't have been able to dismiss her qualms so easily when he'd kissed her. She didn't think she would've been able to respond all, much less with the complete abandon she had.

She did believe.

She didn't care if he had begun life as an android. She loved him.

And where did that leave her? Without even her anger at being deceived as comfort. He'd told her he would be sent away. The conversation they'd had descended upon her like a thunderclap, fully enlightening and blighting at the same time. It explained so much, explained why he spoke and behaved as if he cared for her and yet had never suggested the possibility that there could be more between them than fleeing moments of pleasure. It explained why he'd slipped out of her bed and disappeared before she woke up. It wasn't because he was avoiding her. It was because he was trying to evade detection by the company.

He belonged to the company. Maybe, despite the emotions he'd learned to feel, despite the rebellion he'd exhibited when he'd taken the chance to be with her, he still couldn't break the 'loyalty' they'd programmed into him. Maybe they'd even done something to him, she thought in sudden horror, that would allow them to destroy him if they realized

he was no longer under their control?

The bottom line, she realized in despair, was that it didn't matter how she felt. He was still leaving.

It mattered to Adam, though. He needed to feel that she loved and accepted him whatever he was. She could be wrong, of course. She could be gifting him with feelings he didn't have, but she'd seen hurt in his eyes when he'd told her he couldn't bear for her to look at him as they did, and it had looked real enough to her.

That thought brought her to a realization that hadn't hit her before, thoughts that had been teasing at the back of her mind that she'd willfully ignored.

Adam was in danger. If the company found out that he'd evolved beyond their programming and was no longer in their control, they *would* destroy him.

## Chapter Eleven

It was just as well they'd decided to monitor their father, Adam thought grimly, watching the vid display as Whitmore and his father entered the EMR cage and settled before the console. He'd suspected their father was up to something when he'd told them to report to the lab for additional programming. Glancing around the lab, he studied each of the techs to make certain they were still breathing and still completely under the influence of the gas he'd injected into the room and finally turned to look at his brother.

*He's not convinced, but he's suspicious or he wouldn't have decided to look at the surveillance vids.*

*Decrease the power on the EMR. There's too much interference to hear them clearly,* Adam responded grimly.

Nodding, his brother initiated a power drain by increasing the consumption in other parts of the office complex.

*Not too much,* Adam cautioned. *The alarm will go off and alert them.*

There was still a distinct, annoying buzz overlaying the sound when his brother had cut the power by nearly half, but the words were clear enough—and damning.

"I think you're overreacting."

Whitmore shook his head. "Maybe, but he was specifically programmed *never* to leave the building for *any* reason. He shouldn't have been able to override that programming, Mr. Johnson."

"Pull it up and let's have a look at it and then backtrack and see if we can detect any other anomalies in his behavior. I think you're wrong, but I sure as hell don't want to get the Secretary of Defense down here and find out you weren't."

"Ms. Carlson already sent the letter," Whitmore reminded him. "What are we going to do if I'm right?"

"We'll worry about that if and when we need to. You told the lab techs to do a thorough evaluation on the two of them?"

"Yes, sir. I don't know if they'll be able to detect anything, though."

Johnson's lips tightened. "I don't like this fucking guessing," he growled. "We've got too much riding on this project to screw up."

They stopped speaking when they'd brought the vid up on the screen. Both men leaned forward. "God damn it!" Johnson snarled. "Run that again."

Whitmore and their father exchanged a long look.

Adam and his brother exchanged a glance.

"Where would they have been?" Whitmore asked finally.

Their father tapped his chin. "Has he shown any interest in any of the women besides Ms. Carlson?"

Whitmore frowned. "Not that I've heard, but then I didn't even know he'd noticed her until you told me."

"Bring up the vid with their encounter in the conference room."

"What day was that?"

“Ms. Carlson’s birthday—two weeks ago this past Tuesday.”

Whitmore scanned the dates on the vids and finally brought it up.

Both men studied the recording in silence.

Adam exchanged an uneasy glance with his brother, trying to tune out the sounds of Evie’s pleasure and his reaction to it.

“Now, skip forward to his next encounter with her.”

*He’s figured it out.*

*We should’ve destroyed the records,* Adam responded, disgusted.

*They would only have figured it out sooner.*

Adam shook his head. *About us, yes. They wouldn’t have known about Evie, though.*

His brother ground his teeth in frustration. *We should’ve thought of that.*

*It’s too late to worry about it now. We have to decide how to handle this.*

“There!” their father exclaimed, drawing their attention to the men they’d been watching again. “Back track and play it at normal speed.”

Adam studied their expressions, watching for telltale signs of their reaction.

Whitmore shrugged. “Normal emulation mode,” he concluded. “It certainly shows advancement in his interaction capabilities that he would go out of his way to try to make up with her to get another shot at fucking her, but I don’t see anything to be concerned about.”

Their father gave him a disgusted look. “Don’t you? Run it again and tell me what seems out of place.”

Whitmore looked surprised. He complied, studying the recording frowningly. “I don’t see it.”

“She isn’t looking at him,” their father said through gritted teeth. “What would be the point in trying to look so...damned contrite when she wasn’t looking at him? Go back to the conference room vid again and look at it.”

Whitmore was pale as he brought the vid into play again. “Oh my god! Jesus Christ! He isn’t emulating passion. He’s...he completely forgot his programming.”

“Which means he isn’t ‘acting’ at all!”

“What are we going to do?”

“Can you erase everything in his—their memory banks—I didn’t catch the switch, but obviously they’ve both been in on this—and reprogram?”

Whitmore’s color fluctuated from pale to red and back again. “I don’t know. Chances are if we did we’d cause irreparable damage to the biological part of the brain.”

“Then destroy them,” their father growled. “They’re out of control, and if we can’t control them.... And make damned sure you destroy all the records, too. Get on it!”

Whitmore jumped to his feet. “What about Ms. Carlson? She knows.”

“She knows too much, but I’ve already taken care of that. I didn’t like her reaction to the news. After I thought about it, I decided I’d made a mistake with her. I had one of our men plant a ‘package’ in her transport. Prepare a statement for the media to the effect that we suspect a rival international firm. They won’t know it’s her for a while, so be prepared to look shocked and dismayed when we get the news.”

\* \* \* \*

Evelyn didn’t know whether to be relieved or sorry that she didn’t see Adam all

day. On the one hand, she was afraid for him and feared any conversation they might have would alert the company to exactly what she wanted to keep from them. On the other, she desperately wanted to warn him.

She'd already gotten into her transport and was searching for the key to the ignition when she heard her name bellowed so loudly it made her jump and drop her purse. As she whirled to look, she saw Adam barreling toward her at a speed that stunned her to stillness. Reaching her transport, he grabbed the door handle and wrenched the entire door off her vehicle. She was still gaping at him in disbelief when he grabbed her arm and snatched her from the seat.

Clutching her tightly to his chest, he whirled and ran full tilt at a speed that might have amazed her if she'd been in any condition to think.

The concussion from the explosion sent them both toward the pavement. Almost as if she was watching a vid in slow motion, the world tilted as Adam twisted mid-air, taking the brunt of the impact as they collided with the hard surface on his shoulder and side as they landed. He leapt up again before she could even command her lungs to drag air into them.

His twin appeared from out of no where, jogging beside them, and Adam 'tossed' her to the other man as if she'd been virtually weightless. She tensed, but he'd caught her before she could even consider screaming. They'd raced out of the parking garage before she was able to dredge anything from the chaos of her mind. "What's happening?"

Neither man responded. Instead, they paused, surveyed their surroundings, and then raced across the intersection in front of the building and through the small park, finally dropping to a fast walk as they neared the other side. "Adam! What happened? What exploded? Where are we going?"

"Your car," Adam responded grimly, nodding to his brother.

Her attention diverted, Evelyn watched as he glanced around and then strode quickly to a parked transport. A blue spark shot from the tip of his finger as he pointed it at the door lock, then he opened the door and casually got in. Adam carried her around to the passenger side as his twin leaned over and shoved the door open.

"Why would my car explode?" she asked blankly as Adam settled in the seat with her in his lap.

"The bomb they planted in it," he responded succinctly.

Cold dread washed over her. "They? Someone planted a bomb in my car?"

"The company," his twin responded grimly as he ripped the face plate off of the console, studied the circuit board briefly, and then touched his finger to first one point and then another. Sparks shot from his finger, or the circuit board—Evelyn wasn't sure—and then the transport engine roared to life and the vehicle rose from the parked position.

Evelyn struggled with her shock, trying to shake it off and grasp the unbelievable. "They tried to kill me?" she asked weakly. "Why? Why would they do that?"

"Loose end. Because you know about us, and now they know we've evolved and they can't control us."

Evelyn looked from one man to the other, digesting what they'd told her. She didn't actually have trouble believing it, and yet accepting it was another matter. "What are we going to do?"

Instead of answering, Adam lifted a hand to stroke her cheek, then took her hands

and examined her hands and arms before he scanned the rest of her body. “You aren’t hurt?”

She hadn’t considered it until he asked. She didn’t think so, but she was still too numb with shock to really register anything beyond feeling shaken. Her attention was drawn to the bloody scrapes along his arm, though. Consternation went through her. “You’re hurt!”

Catching his hand, she examined the painful looking scrapes and then looked at his face. “The transport exploded. You protected me with your body. Are you hurt besides the arm?”

He shook his head. Pulling her against his chest, he wrapped his arms tightly around her and nuzzled his face in the crook of her neck, dragging in a deep breath. “I was afraid we’d be too late,” he muttered. “We stayed to hear their plans, and it was almost too late, Evie.”

Evelyn snuggled against him, stroking his hair. “But you weren’t too late.”

“We have to get you out of here—to a safe place. They’ll know by now that you weren’t in the transport. Probably will have found out we aren’t in the lab.”

“A diversion?”

Adam considered for a moment and shook his head. “I think the best bet is to take a straight shot and try to evade the net they’ll throw out before they can get it up. Assuming Whitmore went straight to the lab to oversee deprogramming, he will have discovered our absence by now and notified father. Ten minutes to contact the exterminators, maybe fifteen for them to scramble—we can be outside the perimeter before they can get there.”

“They’ll expect that.”

Adam turned to look at him. *Not with the internal destruct programming sequence. It’s designed to trigger if we move beyond the city’s perimeter.*

His brother looked disgusted. *Three more days and they would’ve had to deactivate it to take us to the desert facility. We need to stop somewhere and get rid of the tracking devices.*

Evelyn looked at first one and then the other suspiciously. “What are you two talking about?”

Adam looked at her in surprise. “I was just thinking.”

She gave him a look. “No you weren’t. You two were discussing something you didn’t want me to know.”

Looking vaguely guilty, Adam evaded her gaze. “We have to stop somewhere to get rid of the tracking devices they implanted.”

She knew there was more to it than that, but she saw it would be pointless to pursue it. Whatever it was he didn’t want to tell her, he wouldn’t. She allowed the subject to drop, settling against him again, enjoying the feel of his arms around her. “Thank you,” she said after a few moments.

“For what?” he asked in surprise.

“Saving my life.”

His arms tightened. “I did it for me.”

She smiled. “Did you?”

She heard him swallow. Before he could say more, however, his twin interrupted. “There’s a veterinary clinic one block over.”

Adam nodded. "It should be after hours."

"What...?" Evelyn broke off, realizing abruptly why they needed the clinic. Dismay filled her. "You're going to take the devices out yourself?"

"Out of each other," Adam confirmed.

She didn't want to think about that. "You're both Adam," she said, abruptly changing the subject, feeling the need to separate them in her mind and give them the individuality the company had denied them, to make them understand she didn't see them as a 'unit', not human, that it didn't matter whether they had names at all.

"Yes," they responded in unison.

"It's...confusing," she said tentatively.

"You can't tell us apart."

"I can," she disputed emphatically.

Adam, the one holding her, gave her a doubtful look. "You didn't know there were two of us."

"Exactly—but I can still tell you apart. You look the same, but you aren't the same. You shouldn't have the same name. You're individuals. You should each have a name of your own, just like everybody else."

"It isn't confusing to us," they said in unison.

Evelyn studied his face. "Do you think of yourselves as one person?" she tried again.

"No. We think of each other as brothers. We're clones of our father."

Evelyn's lips tightened. "Bullshit! Maybe some of his DNA was used, but you're certainly not clones of him. You don't look like him—maybe there's a little resemblance, but damn sure not enough for the two of you to be his clone. Each other, yes. Not him."

"He was the primary donor."

"And primary is the key word. There was at least one more. And the two of you are, basically, technically speaking, identical twins."

A faint smile curled Adam's lips. "What do you want to call us?"

She hadn't actually considered it, but she did then. "Daniel and Adam," she said firmly.

"Who's Daniel?"

She turned to look at the man driving. "He is."

"And I'm still Adam?"

"Always."

He looked at her curiously. "Why?"

She smiled, lifting a hand to stroke his cheek lovingly. "Because you were the one who told me why you call me Evie."

He looked startled. A dull red color heated his face. "You're certain of that?"

Evelyn chuckled and leaned close to whisper in his ear. "You're the one who blushes."

Daniel cleared his throat. "I blush."

Evelyn turned to grin at him. "No, you don't. You're the one who's impatient."

He glanced at her uncomfortably and then looked at brother. *Do you think she really can tell us apart?*

*That's an interesting question. If we get out of this alive, maybe we should find*



*out?*

“Conferencing again?”

Adam chuckled, but he didn’t deny it.

Daniel slowed the vehicle, studied a squat little building and circled the block. When he came around again, he parked the transport, leaving the engine idling. Adam scooped her off his lap, settled her on the seat, and got out, closing the door. Evelyn stared at him in surprise as he turned and walked briskly around the building.

Daniel pulled out into traffic again, drove two block,s and parked the vehicle. “We’ll walk from here,” he said as he got out.

“Wouldn’t it have been quicker...?”

“This is safer,” he said as he came around the vehicle and draped an arm around her shoulders, guiding her briskly along the sidewalk. “The two of us never walk together. It attracts too much attention.”

Adam was waiting inside the clinic when they’d slipped around the back and entered through the back entrance.

He’d stripped his shirt off and was arranging an assortment of medical instruments on a tray when they entered the examination room Daniel led her to. Evelyn’s belly clenched as he lay down on his belly on the table. “Where’s the device?” she asked uneasily, knowing it must be in his spine and terrified at the thought.

The two men exchanged a look that made her more nervous. “You should’ve told her to wait in the vehicle,” Adam said.

“It’s stolen. I didn’t want to take the chance she’d be picked up.” He turned to study her. “You should wait outside, near the street—but not in view. Adam disengaged the security system, but we might have been seen and reported. Come and tell me if you see a police cruiser moving slowly past the building.”

## Chapter Twelve

Evelyn studied Daniel. "That's not why you want me outside," she said with conviction. "They would've given you the ability to scan radio frequencies."

The two men exchanged another look. "It'll be safer, Evie. Do it," Adam said.

Evelyn swallowed against a hard knot that formed in her throat. "You're not here to remove tracking devices, are you?"

Adam shook his head. "We have to move quickly, Evie. Please?"

Evelyn bit her lip, looked from one to the other and finally nodded, but only because she realized it wouldn't help them at all if she stayed. She didn't think there was any point in playing 'lookout', but she knew they had to move quickly. Staying to argue was only wasting time they couldn't afford to lose.

She left the building and moved to stand in the recess of a door in the building across from the veterinary office, trying not to think about what they were doing that would make it 'safer' for her if she wasn't in the building with them.

It had to be something implanted in them to destroy them in just such a situation as they now found themselves in. The company, despite their arrogance, wouldn't have left anything to chance. They would've wanted to make certain they had complete control of their Adam project.

She was so relieved when they both exited the building nearly an hour later that she felt tears sting her eyes as she examined them carefully for signs of distress. Both of their faces were drawn, but there was no other indication of the pain she knew they would've both felt having done surgery on one another. "Did you...remove it?"

Adam looked away from her searching gaze. "We need to find two more vehicles."

"Why two?"

"It took longer than expected," Daniel responded easily. "They will have cordoned off the perimeter now. We need to split up. It'll be safer for you if you're in one vehicle and we follow in another."

Evelyn glared at them angrily. "Don't! I'm not an idiot. I know what you were trying to do in there. They implanted something in both of you, didn't they?"

"Tracking...."

"Besides that!" Evelyn cut Adam off.

He didn't approach her. In fact, she noticed both of them had stopped a good ten feet from her.

"You can block the signal, can't you?" she asked, begging them to tell her they could.

The two exchanged a look again, and she ground her teeth in frustration.

"We won't know for certain if we succeeded until we pass the point of no return," Adam said finally.

Evelyn bit her lip. "I want to be with you."

"You'll be safer...."

"I'll be safer with the two of you."

"Once we get beyond the city," Adam assured her soothingly. "We'll pick up two transports. Daniel and I will follow and run interference if we encounter problems. If we're...delayed, keep going. Don't stop. And don't go anywhere where you might be expected to go. Stop at the first place you come to and draw out all of the credits you can and keep moving. They'll stop looking for you if you keep quiet and stay hidden."

Evelyn felt the tears she'd been trying to hold at bay fill her eyes. "I don't want to do any of that. I want to be with you two."

Adam's face twisted. "We want that, too, but we want you to be safe."

Evelyn sniffed back her tears, wiped her cheeks. "I love you, both of you. If anything happens to either of you I'm going straight to the media to tell them everything! I'm not going to let them get away with this!"

Adam studied her for a long moment and finally strode toward her, pulling her into his arms. "I love you, Evie. Promise me you won't do anything like that. I need to know you'll be safe."

She clung to him tightly. "I'm not going to promise that, Adam Mercury!"

He made a sound of frustration. "Evie..."

"No!"

Daniel's hand settled on her back. "We have to go. Every minute we delay our chances diminish."

Evelyn lifted her head and looked at him stubbornly. "Only if you promise me we'll stay together. Otherwise, as soon as I get in a transporter, I'm going straight to the media with the story!"

He caught her face with his hand, studying her angrily for a moment before the anger subsided. "You are a stubborn woman, Evelyn Carlson! You're determined to gamble your life on whether or not we can block the failsafe?"

"I trust you."

He shook his head at her. Leaning down, he kissed her quickly on the lips. "I love you."

He exchanged a look with Adam. "Let's go."

As Adam and Daniel had predicted, the net had been thrown up before they reached the city exit. There were a half dozen arteries leading from the dome, and, at every one, they found a police check point and had to take an exit off the out ramp. Daniel parked the transport beneath the last they tried and both men turned to study her speculatively.

"What?"

"We'll have to underground. Chances are, you could make it through the check point and meet us on the other side."

"And maybe they'd just take me in because my car blew up and they think I put the bomb in it?" She studied his face and realized he'd already thought of it.

"You'd be better off in police custody," Daniel said grimly.

"Why wouldn't we all be better off?" Evelyn demanded.

"Because the company wouldn't hesitate to use the failsafe if we were compromised,"

Daniel said testily.

Evelyn folded her arms over her chest angrily. "They could arrest me at my apartment. I'm going with you, or I'm going home."

Daniel rolled his eyes but got out of the vehicle. Shaking his head at her, Adam opened his door and got out, holding his hand out to her to help her out.

‘Underground’ turned out to be the sewer system.

They waded through the stinking mess for hours—Adam and Daniel did. They carried her. She didn’t object even though she felt guilty about it, but they were nearly up to their waists in the stinking water, and she knew it would’ve been nearly chest high on her.

Besides, she was wearing heels.

She had a blinding headache from the fumes within minutes and was so sick to her stomach before long that she ceased to worry about the possibility that the men with her were walking bombs that might explode and blow them all to pieces at any time. She’d never been happier about anything in her life than when they finally emerged from the sewer and found themselves in the desert beyond the city.

They’d been walking for several more hours along the desert highway before a man driving a cattle transport finally took pity on them and allowed them to ride in the back. It didn’t smell a lot better than the sewer, but Evelyn was too relieved to be off her feet to care overmuch.

She settled gratefully on a mound of hay between Adam and Daniel. “We made it,” she murmured, tired but elated. “We reek, but we’re still alive.”

Adam tightened his arm around her. “It’ll be safe enough, now, to find a hotel for the night.”

“Umm,” Evelyn agreed, although she had her doubts any self-respecting establishment would let them have a room. “Where are we going?”

Daniel shifted beside her. “Where would you like to go?”

“I don’t care as long as I’m with you,” she responded, snuggling comfortably between them.

The End